UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Negotiating Difference In The Classroom: A Conversational Study

by

Elizabeth Witherspoon ©

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Elementary Education
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"There is as much difference between us and ourselves as between us and others."

Michel de Montaigne

(1533-1592)

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled NEGOTIATING DIFFERENCE IN THE CLASSROOM: A CONVERSATIONAL STUDY submitted by ELIZABETH WITHERSPOON in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

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DEDICATION

To those in the field negotiating difference.

ABSTRACT

This research is a longitudinal study focussed on four preservice teachers' developing knowledge of difference. The research, a narrative inquiry, was conducted between the methodological frameworks of interpretive biography as presented by Denzin (1989) and the personal experience methods described by Clandinin and Connelly (1994). Working within these two methodologies enabled me, as researcher, to be a collaborative participant.

My work builds on previous research in two ways: one, it focuses on trying to understand learning to teach children of difference; two, it is a longitudinal study that follows one group of preservice teachers from a pre-practicum period into their practicum experience and through the post-practicum period. Data takes the form of telling student teacher stories and responses to each others' stories. Together, the participants I worked with, and I, explored learning to teach and considered different possibilities of how we interacted with children of different backgrounds. We created a space in which we encouraged each other to share stories of teaching that were important to us. Many of our conversations focussed on the tensions between what we considered good teaching and what those above us in the institutional hierarchy believed was good teaching. These conversations frequently included discussions around teacher knowledge, teacher education and teaching in today's classrooms filled with children from different backgrounds. Within these discussions other questions were asked such as: How do preservice teachers make sense of difference in their practicum experience? How would my personal practical knowledge influence preservice teachers' teaching practices with children of different backgrounds? What kind of spaces do preservice teachers need in order to voice issues encountered during

practicum? How can preservice teachers begin to understand difference by sharing their own stories of difference with each other, myself and the students they teach?

As a teacher educator I want to continue creating spaces where my students and I can explore learning to teach and understanding how our personal practical knowledge shapes our practice and beliefs when we teach those who are not like us.

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CHAPTER I

Narrative Beginnings

Introduction

In my last few years of classroom teaching, as I was changing my own practice, I was becoming concerned about how beginning teachers were interacting with children of different backgrounds. This was a time when scoring well on state-mandated achievement tests was stressed. There was little time for any teachers, preservice or experienced, to listen to children's stories about why they could not concentrate on the skills sheets they were expected to complete for that day. In attempts to help children do well on the tests, I watched my colleagues and me often strip the children of their individuality and assimilate them into one giant test-taking body. My concern about children's uniqueness alongside, reflections of my own evolving teaching practice and continuous exposure to preservice teachers' lack of preparation for teaching in real classrooms, classrooms filled with children who came from different backgrounds, encouraged me to enroll in a doctoral program focused on teacher education.

As I began my program, my hope was to further an appreciation of who children are and the wealth of knowledge they bring to school through the retelling of my teaching stories and by listening to undergraduate students share their own classroom experiences. At that time, I believed my doctoral study and its findings would be the tools with which I would share my knowledge as "expert". My expert knowledge would then transform my participants' lives and the lives of anyone else who checked out my thesis. In retrospect, I am amazed at how uncomplicated I assumed my research would be. As a first time researcher I was not prepared for the chaos, turmoil and confusion I would encounter as I engaged in this inquiry. I was not prepared for the reflection, reaction, growth and understanding which occurred as the research progressed. This new understanding of the research helped me shift from a place where I storied myself as expert to a place where I can retell my story as teacher educator. I consider myself fortunate for I am surrounded by friends who have wonderful understandings of narrative inquiry. I appreciate their willingness to help me understand how I can draw on narrative inquiry to become a better teacher educator. I now understand that my place in the story of teacher education is one of mentor, facilitator, co-learner--it is not one of transformation maker, a source of knowledge from which students can be changed by learning ***my*** vision of what is right for children. I now see that my role is to help my students make sense of difference in their own ways, and that this continuous, shifting journey towards understanding difference is a process we engage in together...relationally.

It is only in the last few years, hundreds of miles away from home, that I now find myself in a space which promotes everything I was always too afraid, and felt too alone, to pursue. It was in this research space that I have come to understand we learn to live our lives as we tell and retell our stories. The ways in which our stories are given back to us by others can lead us to new understandings and new ways to author our lives (Clandinin,1991).

Telling and Retelling My Stories

As I tell and retell the story of my experience, I want to give a sense of the shifting that occurred throughout this process; a process I am drawing upon from Clandinin and Connelly's (1998) work:

> The promise of storytelling emerges when we move beyond regarding a

> story as a fixed entity and engage in conversations with our stories. The mere telling of a story leaves it as a fixed entity. It is in the inquiry, in our conversations with each other, with texts, with situations, with other stories that we can come to retelling our stories and reliving them." (p.208)

In my first "telling" of a story, it is told as a memory, for "persons only 'know' themselves after the fact of expression" (Kerby, 1991, p.5). When I "retell" a story it is the shift I experience after I have reflected on, received multiple responses, and tried to construct new understandings of that particular time in my life. Not all of the stories will have "retellings" as my journey of making sense of many situations is, and will continue to be, a work-in-progress. My stories are stories of my multiple positionings and stories of how I experienced difference on and off the school landscape. They are filled with tentative border crossings as I experienced Lugones' (1987) "world travelling". She defines world travelling as the willful exercise of an "outsider who has necessarily acquired flexibility in shifting from the mainstream construction of life where she is constructed as an outsider to other constructions of life where she is more or less 'at home'." (p.3) I understand Lugones' sense of world travel as closely connected with telling and retelling our stories; it is also a process of shifting, transforming, and ultimately expanding our knowing. Anzaldua (1987) writes about this transformative process as "bordercrossings." The bordercrossings Anzaldua imagines lead to spaces "wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy" (preface). In such "middle spaces" (Greene 1993;1995) individuals are able to tell their stories in relation with others and, it is in these kinds of relational processes that our understanding of our selves and others, shifts and is reshaped. As a former classroom teacher and now as a teacher educator, my purpose for this research is my growing passion to help others, especially preservice teachers, understand "difference" through story. By sharing how I positioned myself in different places on my school landscapes I want those who work with children to be aware of, and work toward understanding, the many shifts which occur in their understanding of difference. By coming to understand their own stories, I am hopeful that preservice teachers will be able to help their future students negotiate their own bordercrossings as they compose their lives off and on school landscapes.

A First Telling: The Anticipated Plot Line

My first public school experience in which a teacher seemed unaware of the personal turmoil I was experiencing, happened at the beginning of my second grade year. The population enrolled at this school was all white with the exception of one female child who was black and me. The previous year I was enrolled in a predominately Hispanic school in south Texas. There, even though we were all English speakers and were all learning in English, the majority of the population were the same color. But a year later, in second grade at a new school, I began to realize that I was a different color from the rest of the children. I was brown. I was not white and I was not black. I remember some of the other children making fun of the black girl, one day making her so angry she picked up a black crayon and drew a line across her hand and said, "There! The line is black! I am not! " I remember being so impressed by her strength that I started playing with her at recess even though I ran the risk of being excluded from other play groups by befriending her, but soon found that as long as I was not black, I suffered no overt prejudice. I soon realized that my color did not seem to affect the students or teachers as her color did. It was the first time of many to follow that I experienced the inner tension that accompanied societal contradictions shaping my schooling experiences.

Another memory of difference is of my second grade Sunday school teacher. She embodied what I believed the culture I lived in considered successful. She was beautiful, white, articulate, beloved and respected for her social position as well as for her contributions to the community. She was also the first teacher to reward my participation with a gift, a small white Bible with gold lettering. Pristine, just like her. It became one of the most cherished gifts I would ever receive. Her acknowledgement of my efforts was revered. I wanted to be just like her when I grew up.

I now see that this was the beginning of a "cover story" (Clandinin &Connelly, 1995; Crites, 1979) I would try for years, to live out. Crites uses the term "cover story" to describe stories we tell in order to fit in with what we believe to be the authorized versions of successful plotlines shaping our society. In order to be successful in the world in which I was living as a student, I realized that I would have to try to be more like her. My story would involve marriage to a community leader's son by the age of eighteen with an intention to spend the rest of my life devoted to my husband, children, and my community. I remember knowing that the border crossing into this world would prove to be difficult, because of the border of prejudice associated with the color of my skin. Although it would be difficult, it did not stop me from searching for a way to use my difference to build a bridge negotiating my way into the upper status crowd, even as a peripheral member. That, to me, would still be experienced as success.

As a doctoral student, I read Hunger of Memory by Richard Rodriguez (1982), and was struck by how similar he and I were in many ways. By the time he was in second grade he, too, had come to recognize the power of culture and knew that, in order to succeed, he would have to give up his Mexican identity and learn how to assimilate into the white society of power. He did this by emulating his teachers. Everything they said and did was studied with great concentration. He was extremely aware of English sounds. He vividly remembers the first time he heard his name pronounced in English...Rich-heard Road-ree-guess.

I have always been extremely careful in pronouncing my students' names correctly. It is only now as I reread some of my original drafts that I realize where this need to have names pronounced correctly may have come from. My last name was not the most difficult name to pronounce, but I have many memories of indifference to the mispronunciation of my last name. I remember watching a television program one night and hearing the star's name announced. It was very similar to mine and for several nights afterwards I practiced saying that name instead of mine. It sounded whiter, more sophisticated, better than my name which so many people seemed to have difficulty pronouncing. My daughter is the one, now, who struggles with the correct pronunciation of her name. Her name is twice as difficult because her first name is my maiden surname (an ethnic surname) and her last name, although Anglo in origin, has a multitude of possible spellings and pronunciations.

As Rodriguez (1982) described, even though his complexion itself labeled him as non-white, he could remember very few incidents of prejudice as a child, even though he and his mother tried several home remedies to lighten his skin. Reading his story of this need to become whiter I remember how my elbows were very dark and I felt they screamed to every passer-by to notice that I was dark all over. I believed they accentuated the fact that I was darker than the rest of my friends. I once heard that rubbing lemon juice on my elbows would make them lighter. I tried this remedy but, after a while, all I accomplished were bitter-smelling hands and chafed elbows. For all the work and secrecy it took, as I never shared this problem with my parents, it was not worth the trouble.

Another connection between Richard Rodriguez and me is that his parents wanted him to have an easier life and to never have to work as a *bracero* (manual laborer). My parents knew, in order for me to enjoy more success than they had, they would have to point me in the "right" direction. I was ten years old when my parents decided that my brother and I should experience what direction our lives could take should we attempt to stray from the mainstream. My mother put the plan into action as she prepared for our summer vacation. She met with an old friend in charge of delivering field workers to an area in Michigan. Her friend agreed that we could follow the truck caravan transporting the migrant workers (men, women, and their children) to Michigan. When we arrived at the designated area in Michigan, we would be allowed to work alongside the other workers for a couple of weeks.

As this journey progressed, I often wondered what it was like for the people traveling inside the trucks. What did they do all day? How did they cope with the inability to look outside whenever they wished? The truck had side boards and was covered with a giant tarp. Every time we stopped for a bathroom break, I wondered how the women and teenagers dealt with the embarrassment of having to take care of bodily functions in ravines, ditches and wooded areas. When we arrived at the farm, it reminded me of something I had seen in a movie about the deplorable working conditions migrant workers endured. Now I was witnessing that account first hand. I was crossing over into a new world, a world my mother wanted my brother and I to be aware of, but not to be a part of.

We were one of many families living and working in this migrant-worker camp.

We were told that our first job would be picking cherries. What fun I thought! I still did not understand that this was not an elaborate field trip for the other workers as it was for me. The reality of economic necessity for these families meant that they could not walk away. While I had temporarily travelled into their world, I knew I was planning to return to my own world.

It was quickly pointed out that, since I was only ten, I would be allowed in the orchard, but I would not be paid. However, I was determined to show the rest of the workers and my family that I could pull my own weight. I would not be looked upon as a child unable to help fill crates or one too special to stay behind at the camp unaccompanied like the other under-aged children. I was able to keep up with my mother and brother. In my memory I filled one small crate for every two they filled. At the end of the first day I was quite proud of the work I had accomplished.

Then I noticed that, even though I had worn a shirt with long sleeves, the cherry juice and chemicals from the fruit trees had turned my light brown arms an appalling purple black that would not wash off. I spent a long time trying to scrub the stains off with the bowl of water we had in our quarters. Trying to wash my long three feet of hair, now turned sticky and matted from the juice and chemicals, proved to be impossible inside. My mother washed it in full view of everyone in the compound under a water spigot adjacent to the outdoor washrooms. This was a totally unforgettable moment for me. Although I do not remember that we attracted an audience, the very act of having my mother perform a personal grooming task so publicly was quite demeaning. I remember realizing if a photojournalist had come upon this scene, there was the shocking, to me, possibility that he would not be able to differentiate my mother and me (observers from outside of this world) from the rest of the *real* workers. For an instant, the field trip experience reflected a possible reality and, as I watched the muddy, soapy water splash onto my legs and my new sandals, I wanted no part of it.

After a few days of picking cherries, we were assigned the back-breaking task of picking cucumbers and, later, raspberries. As our time in the camp came to a close, I looked forward to spending the next night in a nice clean comfortable hotel. My only reminder of the brief encounter with the migrant worker world was my still dark gray arms and sore back. I was quite happy to be able to walk away from that way of life. I was not like those people. The only thing I saw we had in common was the color of our skin. After witnessing the hardships the migrant workers endured on a daily basis I had no qualms over what I might need to do in the future to remain as faraway from that reality and closer to white middle-class mainstream society. This was my world and one I was clearly more accustomed to living.

Once more, Rodriguez' experience echoes my own:

> I can still hear the loudly confident voice he used with the Mexicans. It was the sound of the *gringo* I had heard as a very young boy. And I can still hear the quiet, indistinct sounds of the Mexican, the oldest, who replied. At hearing that voice I was sad for the Mexican. Depressed by their vulnerability. Angry at myself. The adventure of the summer seemed

> suddenly ludicrous. I would not shorten the distance I felt from *los pobres* with a few weeks of physical labor. I would not become like them. They were different from me. (Rodriguez, 1982, p.136)

My seventh grade year was a turbulent one as it was the first year of enforced desegregation in my school district. It was also a year I remember as filled with decisions about what *clique* I wanted to belong to rather than the pursuit of good grades. At this age, my peers did not have a problem excluding others from certain events if they did not somehow "belong". These peers, sons and daughters of lawyers, bankers and doctors, were the children I had spent the majority of the last three years with in Sunday School. They made it clear before too long that yes, they were my friends, but mostly at Sunday School and not quite as much at school or at social functions away from the church. I seemed to be able to live with that because they did not totally exclude me. I now realize that they certainly kept me at arm's length.

This partial exclusion led me to find friends who were more accepting and less tied to the expectations of their parents and society. These friends were neighborhood children, sons and daughters of teachers like my mother and "company men" as my dad was known. We all took turns hanging out at each others' homes, usually at mine where we jumped on the trampoline, swam in the pool or swung on a sturdy vine hanging from a tree like Tarzan. When I was invited to my Sunday School friends' homes, my mother would take me to one of the most exclusive childrens' stores where we would discreetly ask the sales clerk to show us something appropriate for the occasion. I remember the embarrassment I felt not only myself, but for my mother as well, who, while being proud that the sales clerk knew I was invited into some of the wealthiest homes in the city, was somehow less adept at choosing the appropriate dress (after all, what do rich kids wear to a birthday party?). The "appropriate" dress usually turned out to be a dress I would only be able to wear once, twice (maybe to church) if I was lucky. In retrospect, I cannot believe the amount of money my mother was willing to spend to keep up with social expectations. She is a skilled and creative seamstress who could have, just as easily, created a copy.

Maybe the fact that it was not "home made" and had a store bought label was proof that my parents could afford to dress me suitably. They could not afford to let my clothing be a poor reflection of me or themselves. Besides having to negotiate this social landscape on a weekly basis, my mother often crossed over into the business world run by people who were our church connections. I imagine my parents viewed any expenses incurred, such as appropriate clothing, as an investment in our family's future in that community.

My mother, a teacher for several years, had a well established reputation as an extraordinary educator and as a successful real estate salesperson. It was in this capacity that she gained the respect of community leaders including the parents of those Sunday School friends of mine. By the time I reached high school I had a high profile in the community, thanks to my mother. My long hair, approximately four feet in length, added to my profile. It was a trademark with perks as well as drawbacks. Its perks included its great attention-getting ability, adult admiration and instant recognition. The instant recognition had its own drawback in that all my mother had to do to find me at the mall, at school, or at the Houston Astrodome, was to ask, "...have you seen a teenager with hair down to here" (motioning to her knees) and they would point her in the right direction. Another drawback was the effect it had on people of Hispanic background. Many of them, especially if they were recent immigrants from

Mexico, brought their beliefs and superstitions with them. One of those, directed at me through my hair, was the *Mal de Ojo* (evil eye). This malady would occur when something like long hair, light colored eyes or very pretty babies were openly admired and envied but not touched. Many times I would be the target of *accidental* tugs on my long hair. Most of the time I acknowledged their apologetic gestures following an incident because I understood the implications of not being touched. The Mal de Ojo could manifest itself in many ways. It might be as innocuous as a headache or could appear to be a life-threatening fever.

It was, for me, a reminder of the border I tried to maintain between myself and the Mexican people. This border created mixed feelings for me. While I felt respect and some understanding for them as they ever so gently touched my hair in order for me not to fall victim to the perils of the Mal de Ojo, I also felt annoyed, embarrassed and ashamed when this happened around my teenaged friends. There was no escaping the mandatory explanation which quickly followed. As I look back now I realize I was finding it difficult enough trying to define who I was as an adolescent let alone negotiating a journey of difference under constant threats of exclusion. I felt compelled to separate myself from these superstitious Mexican people by belittling their beliefs and as I belittled them, I created an impenetrable border between my world and theirs.

During my junior high years, my parents convinced me that it was my duty as a second generation Mexican-American to perform Mexican folk dances in an effort to share a small part of my cultural background with the general public. Although it was embarrassing for me to dance in front of my friends, I soon learned there were fringe benefits associated with performing. My partner and I were invited to perform at prestigious women's clubs, social gatherings, festivals and restaurants. We were always in the limelight of the local newspaper and radio. At one point, my partner and I were invited to dance on a weekly TV show. The theme was Hispanic-oriented and we were the entertainment during the break between guests. Another one of our regular performances was at an extremely popular Mexican restaurant. One day, while dancing at the restaurant, my teen-age ego must have been on overdrive because one of our entourage came in as I was undressing and asked if we could dance one more time as a family had missed our last show. Unfortunately, they were late and I would not consider getting dressed to perform again. Since we were not professional performers (my partner insisted he not break his amateur status) we were never paid in real money. Monetary substitutions included eating free at the restaurant, small tokens of appreciation, publicity through the radio and TV shows and pictures in the newspaper. I guess that particular night I decided a free meal was not worth getting dressed again to do something I felt was more belittling than rewarding.

Although I thrived on being in the spot light, the novelty of the spotlight soon lost its shine, especially when I started dancing with a non-white partner. I feared the audience might start assuming we were "real" Mexican performers. I was unwilling to allow the audience to think this was the world in which I lived. For me, performing was just one more way I found I could use my difference to my advantage. If I had to "shine" wearing costumes from a world filled with a contradictory story to live by, I was willing to do that. I believed I could negotiate these temporary border crossings and use my difference as a way to further my efforts of crossing over into the mainstream world, a world with which I ***did*** want to be associated. This border crossing dance I performed literally and metaphorically, was one I would continue to dance for many years. I would dance this dance until it took me where I wanted to be. Once I believed myself successful, I would then make a sincere effort to explore the Hispanic culture. A culture, I realize I will never be completely free to escape, therefore I must find a way to come to an understanding of this part of my narrative history if the stories I live and tell are to shift and grow in a meaning filled way.

Learning To Teach During My Undergraduate Years

My high school days did not involve many dancing engagements and I was able to enjoy doing more mainstream teenage activities. I would not put on my dancing shoes again until I needed to do a multicultural project at university. It was for a Spanish language course I was taking. The professor decided that we should explore the Hispanic culture. Once again I saw what could have been a wonderful opportunity to learn about my culture be reduced to the food and festival approach. However, I remained silent. I did not raise concerns about the food and festival approach but decided to just go along. I was torn between wanting to accept the culture at a deeper level and going against what everyone else had decided to do. The night of cultural awareness took place in a large dining hall. I danced with a new partner and several people brought food. There may have been a song or two. After the presentation the professor chastised us for our superficial effort. That was my last dancing engagement. I have not performed since then.

In the Spanish language class, I again found myself in a place where I believed I was ready to learn more about the Hispanic culture. I was certain that this professor would help us delve deeply into the rich history of the Mexican people. Unfortunately, she left the major portion of this event up to us, the students. After limited discussion, we, as a collective of students, decided that some of us would make and bring food and some would provide the entertainment. It would be a night of fun-filled activities. And, even though I knew that bringing food would not require much effort on my part, I ultimately chose to do something that did not require much more effort than the rest of the students. I decided I would dust off my dancing shoes, teach a new partner the necessary dance steps and perform a popular dance. I found myself once again lost in a contradiction. I wanted to do well in the course but to do so by earning an easy grade. I also could move into the culture easily in my temporary "tourist" status, all the while trying to maintain a border between me and "them". Although it was my initial intention to embrace my heritage I found myself entangled in the same contradictory story once again, a story that positioned me as representative and stereotypical, within a perception that kept me from wanting to be a part of this culture.

I attended the same university my mother graduated from a few years prior to my enrollment. It was beginning to look like this might be a new tradition with my family. I sensed already unvoiced expectations that one day my children would attend the same university. The existing tradition was to choose teaching as a profession. My mother was a teacher as her mother had been a teacher before her. I understood and never questioned the notion that I, too, would be a teacher. Although I cannot imagine myself in any other profession, I now experience a sadness that I was never encouraged to pursue any other career interest. Being a teacher was a family plot line for the women in our family.

It was also a career that ensured I would not end up as a migrant worker in the fields of Michigan or Idaho or California. It was a career that held meaning and the promise of a brighter future for myself and my students. The story told in mainstream society was that the work the migrant workers did was meaningless, mindless and futureless.

My story of attending university for my bachelor's degree in the eighties and my master's degree ten years later echoed the stories my colleagues share about their own institutions during this time. These institutions of learning were places that did not encourage individual voice and growth. These institutions created teachers, like me, who fell into the story that good teachers were followers, did as they were told and perpetuated this philosophy by instilling this story in their future students. They did so by following mandated curriculum handed down by the local school district. I experienced my undergraduate work as a collection of courses, limiting field placements often experienced as disconnected and separated from the other university courses. I did my part by assembling a myriad of assignments that my teacher education classes required. The games, folders and bulletin boards, rarely more than duplicates of library information were often irrelevant, impractical and more decorative than educative.

Teacher education classes seemed far removed and disconnected from what I really believed I needed to know in order to become the best teacher I could be. Practice did not seem related to theory in a relevant way and theory had no practical use in the classroom. Even some of the professors seemed to reflect this discontinuity in the manner in which they taught. The faculty seemed to have little communication with each other in order to make the program seem more integrated. There were, however, exceptions. One professor influenced me the most in those years. The class seemed a carbon copy of the rest of my courses with the exception of the way in which students were treated. In this classroom context, there seemed to be genuine respect and caring.

Unfortunately there also seemed to be no challenge in the work required. Years later, as a graduate student again, mediocre work was still accepted with very little emphasis or modeling on how it could be made better. There was little emphasis on my growth through experience, reflection and self examination. There was only the continued sense that teachers should be transmitters of predetermined information. There was no encouragement, guidance, or direction given to shape my classroom teaching or my supervision of student teachers. Even after I mentioned I might want to pursue a doctorate, encouragement to be more self-disciplined and knowledgeable did not occur. No sense of the dilemmas I might encounter was offered. No attempt to show me how much work was involved by sharing their personal experiences was provided. After all, professors were to be thought of as the “expert”.

My undergraduate and subsequent graduate experience of periphery learning led me back to university and a doctoral program which would allow me to venture ever so tentatively into my first research attempt. I chose to develop a weekly conversation group in which four preservice teachers could have a space in which to share unvoiced stories, desires, and questions. I imagined these conversations would include the issues of difference, childhood memories of home and school, teacher education courses and the hidden curriculum, practicum teaching stories controlled by evaluation, substitute teaching stories and the politics of applying for permanent positions. I also wanted to share my own stories about how I am just beginning to come to understand my preservice experiences and beginning teaching.

Telling My Teaching Stories of Difference

Once I began sharing my own stories in graduate courses through discourse, I realized how vulnerable I was as a beginning teacher and how susceptible I was to district manipulation. In one of my courses I became interested in Clandinin and Connelly's (1995) work which helped me to think about the school contexts where I had worked in terms of landscapes of professional knowledge. I began to recognize how these landscapes were marked by "in" and "out-of-classroom" places. As I shared stories of being situated on and off the school landscapes, I started to think about how difficult it was to live my life off the school landscape. As a representative of the school district which hired me, I felt that I must always be aware that my actions would be interpreted as good or bad as they were constantly measured by school standards. Everything I said and did seemed to be a reflection of the sacred story of assimilation I was helping the district perpetuate. Everyone, teachers, non-bilingual students and especially bilingual students was expected to follow guidelines of what was best for everyone. I walked, talked and taught district directives. By following the directives which came from the administration office, I became a living model of what the system wanted to perpetuate for the children in my care. The district expected me to instill the best of what I had to offer as a young professional Hispanic woman. This is what I had been trained for at university. I should encourage, whenever possible, the ideal that my students *could* grow up to be just like me, successful, if they tried hard enough. One way my bilingual children could minimize their differences and achieve this story was by acquiring English fluency as quickly as possible in order to become productive members of the school community. The story the school had scripted for me as a responsible teacher was for me to keep the district's directives top priority. My students were from many different backgrounds, yet with the sacred story of assimilation alive on this campus, what and how I taught, was culturally biased in favor of the predominant white middle class culture.

The class makeup in my first classroom was 65% white, 20% black and 15% Hispanic. This was the general makeup of the entire school population. The school itself was situated 10 miles from the center of the city. The children, with the exception of the Hispanic children, were neighborhood children. The Hispanic children were bussed in from all over the city. Some children had to make two transfers. Lucky ones had older siblings to watch over them, others as young as six were on their own.

This district, as was common to the area, implemented a Transitional Bilingual Program. Different instructional models within transitional bilingual programs exist. Students learn in either a self-contained, integrated or a pull-out model. When the children reached the school where I worked, they were placed in English dominant bilingual classrooms. At designated times, depending on their English skills, the bilingual children were pulled out of the classroom and sent to another multilevel multi-age classroom. This was the E.S.L. (English as a Second Language) classroom where a bilingual teacher helped these students, also identified as L.E.P. (Limited English Proficient), with their oral English skills. If there was time, the E.S.L. teacher helped the students with their class work. These pull-out times varied but generally were in forty-five minute blocks. The story alive on this school landscape was that since these children had immigrated illegally into our country, the least they could do was learn English as quickly as possible and become productive members of the school community. By achieving this goal the bilingual children attained inclusion into the story of success. If unable to achieve this goal they would live the other more marginalized story of exclusion. Although the actual percentage of children without proper documentation was very small, if the child was designated as bilingual, it was automatically assumed that the child, or at the very least, someone in their family had to fall into the illegal status. This stereotypical thinking was prevalent among non bilingual teachers as well as among the general public. As Greene (1993) states,

> My point has to do with openness and variety as well as with inclusion. It has to do with the avoidance of fixities, of stereotypes, even the stereotypes linked to multiculturalism. To view a person as in some sense "representative" of Asian... Hispanic... or Afro-American culture is to presume an objective reality called "culture," a homogeneous and fixed presence that *can* be adequately represented by existing subjects. (p.16)

Greene's words spoke to me as I began to write stories of the second school where I taught. My friend Jan and I decided we wanted to approach learning about the Hispanic culture in a different way from the limiting food and festival approach. I remembered my own loathing, my own ambivalence, my own tentative border crossings. Once again, with a bigger picture in mind, I was ready to embrace the culture I had turned my back on time after time. I needed to develop my understanding of this culture. I needed to cross the border and enter this world I was so afraid to connect with, this story I did not want to live. I had to face it and cross over willingly because I wanted our school children to feel proud of the heritage we shared. I would not be able to help them if I did not believe it myself. Jan and I wanted our children to develop higher self esteem and not feel as if they were viewed as deficient.

Unfortunately this school campus was clearly segregated. It was us and them. My friend and I wanted to find a way of making connections among the whites, blacks and Hispanics while not causing our children to suffer even more exclusion. We wanted to help our Hispanic children become prouder and, at the same time, promote the learning necessary to build bridges and community among teachers and students. Although at that time I had not yet read any of Maxine Greene's work, as I became familiar with her writing during my doctoral program, she offered me insight into the contradictions my friend Jan and I encountered as we attempted to live out a story of teaching that differed from those scripted for, and commonly lived out by, most of our colleagues on this school landscape. Greene (1993) wrote:

> Americans have wondered how to deal with the conflicts between individ-ualism and the drive to conform. We want our classrooms to be just and caring...articulate, with the dialogue involving as many persons as possible, opening to one another, opening to the world. And we want them to be concerned for one another, as we learn to be concerned for them. We want them to achieve friendships among one another, as each one moves to a heightened sense of craft and wide-awakeness, to a renewed consciousness of worth and possibility. (p. 18)

Jan and I started to build a new story line with the other bilingual teachers by constructing large scale paper pyramids and prominently displaying them in the cafeteria. The bilingual classes began announcing interesting Hispanic facts over the intercom, crafting clay sculptures, displaying Mexican art and teaching Spanish words to the early morning cafeteria crowd. By living the scripted story on this school landscape and being considered successful as a result, I used the influence I had earned and, after a thorough discussion, convinced the principal that all activities be performed by both bilingual and non-bilingual classes. By being included in the Hispanic oriented activities, the entire school was sharing in the learning process. Jan and I believed the majority of non-bilingual students and non-bilingual teachers felt increased ownership and enjoyed the program more. This new story of a more educated school population lasted one more year before there was a huge turnover in staff. It was difficult for the new teachers to understand how hard we were trying to create a school landscape that honored the ancestral heritages of our children. The new teachers questioned, "Why were we celebrating Mexican holidays anyway?" After all, "This wasn't Mexico!" Four years later, after several futile attempts to reestablish the connection Jan and I had made in the beginning of our work together, I relinquished the reins of program coordinator. It was not long before the celebrations turned back into a dog and pony show. It left a bad taste in my mouth.

I no longer was responsible for planning two Mexican holiday programs a year, although it was expected that my class participate. While participation was expected, I refused to allow my students to participate in any dancing or singing. I continued to have them represent the culture through clay sculptures, charcoal sketches, and mosaics.

I also decided I would help my students improve their scores on the state-mandated tests. This would be how I would show off my "nice little Mexicans". As derogatory as that term sounds, non-bilingual teachers actually were trying to pay a compliment to my students and me.

During the course of the year there were events where bilingual students were excluded due to the language barrier and the segregation of our classrooms. I wanted my students to feel good about themselves. Their lives on and off the school landscape were important. I believed they should be doubly proud since they were constantly negotiating two very different worlds. Ultimately, their success in both worlds gave them a better chance of acquiring scholarships, of being proficient translators for the needs of their families and, perhaps, enabling themselves to restory and help each other to live successful story lines.

When I was in this space, I often thought about how one successful member of a group could help reshape other members of the group in order to ensure success for each other. It reminded me of how my mother had shaped my life so that my story would be a successful one -- a life with purpose, and lived with respect. At the time, I believed I was trying to help my students learn how to use their difference in a respectful way. As Freire & Macedo (1987) suggest:

> Every person ought, on some level...cherish her or his culture... [however] it should never be absolutized. When it is absolutized, when a person is closed against the new culture surrounding her or him, you would...even find it hard to learn new things which, placed alongside your personal history, can be meaningful. (p. 126)

An underlying story line at this and other campuses where I taught was that, if "these Mexicans" were going to live in the U.S., they should learn English and how to assimilate into the predominant culture. Since this kind of thinking was impossible to evade, I tried to find ways to help my students cherish their home culture and, at the same time, learn to live in their new Anglo world.

Making learning relevant was important to my students and me. When I taught on this campus, my students were required to take the Spanish version of the latest state mandated test. The bilingual students were expected to score as well on these tests as the non-bilingual classes. Even though the tests were written in Spanish, it was evident that they were clearly translated versions of the English test. The subjects that were used in stories and references to history were culturally biased. For example, some of the stories in the reading portion were about the workings of local government, regional customs and colloquial terms and travel plans that not only included input from all family members, but ultimate destinations included various forms of transportation. Some of the students had very little background knowledge of American history or of subjects commonly known to English speakers. When it came to discerning whether the stories might be fact or fiction, most of the bilingual students were completely baffled and, ultimately, filled with frustration. Many speak to the issue of how inequalities practiced in our society tend to be perpetuated in schools (Anzaldua, 1987; Delpit, 1988; Fine, 1987; Gosh, 1996; Greene,1993, 1995; Oakes, 1996; Rodriguez, 1982). Oakes writes:

> ...schools compound the disadvantages of children who have less outside of school...bilingual and limited-English proficient students, are judged to be disabled, "not ready"...or most pernicious, simply not as intelligent as their more advantaged peers. The upshot is that even though it's disappointing when children don't achieve, it's not really unexpected in urban schools.... (p. 3)

It was always my desire to help my students experience success, especially in the context of achievement tests. We constantly struggled to change the notion that being classified as "disadvantaged" did not automatically classify my students as failures.

Changing My Teaching Practice

In the late 1980s, I moved to my third elementary school campus, where I taught third grade. The bilingual program in this district was undergoing major restructuring as a result of budget cuts and downsizing. It would no longer be a separate entity but would be combined with the reading program and supervised by the district language arts coordinator. Lower primary grades would be housed on one campus and upper primary grades would be housed on another campus. Two classes each of third and fourth graders would be housed at the school where I worked with a total of eleven hundred students in prekindergarten to fourth grade. The majority of the population was white with a small minority of Black students and an even smaller number (80) of Hispanic students. As a member of the bilingual program the feeling was one of being quite outnumbered.

The three other bilingual teachers were also new to the district. There was no one to show us the ropes or to warn us about the heavy prejudice and injustice our students and we would suffer. Our program was looked upon as inconsequential. The non-bilingual teachers on campus chose to believe that the bilingual teachers were not even certified. Bilingual teachers seemed to be excluded from decision making conversations about the curriculum, class size, and student well-being. They were included in discussions around unimportant issues such as how to park our cars in the parking lot to where the annual Christmas party was to be held. Contrary to their beliefs, we were not only certified but held bilingual certification as well.

Our children were viewed in much the same way as we were. Many seemed to think they had no right to be educated, especially considering the fact that some of the students' families had immigrated illegally from Mexico.

Once again, the stereotypical thinking I experienced on my second elementary campus was prevalent on this elementary campus. However, there was a subtle shift in this story on my new school campus. Most of our bilingual students were English-dominant, which meant, although they were classified as bilingual, they preferred to speak English. However, upon enrollment at their home schools, their parents had to fill out a form which asked this simple question "What language is spoken at home?" Naturally they would fill in the word Spanish. Filling in that blank was their child's one-way ticket into the bilingual program, usually one situated on a campus away from their neighborhood. There, they stayed until they went to fifth grade at another school and were automatically placed in an English as a Second Language setting.

Up to this point, my career was the most important thing to me. The children I taught were *just* students. I treated them well as any good teacher would, but their needs were clearly secondary. I shared few meaningful connections with them. But all that was about to change. This elementary campus and the unfortunate reality of segregation and marginalization directed at my students, my fellow bilingual teachers and me changed the relationship between my students and me forever. Yes, I would keep negotiating the bordercrossings necessary to make a name for myself but not at the expense of my students' welfare. I began to wage a campaign against the segregation and marginalization alive on this school landscape. I could not bear to see my students live the stories imposed on them by this lack of understanding. I was determined my students and I could change the story that had so ingrained itself on this elementary campus. For the next three years I began selecting students I believed would do well academically. I was adamant about mainstreaming them into non-bilingual classrooms. While I hated drafting my students this way because I knew how they would be treated, I knew someone had to pave the way for others to follow. After the initial awkwardness and some excellent scoring by the bilingual students, we all knew it was working. It was a wonderful feeling. Our students knew they were gaining some respect. It was a start.

Sandra was one of these first brave students. I met her during my first year teaching at this elementary campus. She was in a classroom of seventeen boys and six girls. At first Sandra was so quiet, that she masked her true ability. It was not long before I found out that academically she was head and shoulders above the rest of my students, and her verbal skills in English were as good as her verbal skills in Spanish. With each passing day, she impressed me with her easy grasp of whatever subject we were studying, so much so that I decided to recruit her as one of my students who would help change the current story associated with being a part of the bilingual program at this school.

I decided Sandra would be the first recruit sent into, what seemed to me, was a battle zone. I began to mainstream her into a non-bilingual classroom. At first her shyness worried me because I felt this might contribute to her regular classroom teacher developing a narrow perception of Sandra's true ability just as it had with me initially. But Sandra also had the determination (she now refers to this as stubbornness) to show others that she was more than capable. She came back after the first day's experience and proclaimed victoriously that it was going to be a breeze. The other students in the non-bilingual classroom were less than receptive but, because she had broken through the barriers, she quickly changed their attitudes. I was very proud of the way she overcame her shyness in this battle we were waging against the ignorance that perpetuated a story filled with prejudice at that school. Soon my other bilingual colleagues were following my lead and sending a couple of students each into the non-bilingual classrooms. We were slowly and systematically invading precious territory and changing the school story.

Retelling the Story of Changing My Practice

"Stories have the power to direct and change our lives." (Noddings, 1991, p.157)

The victory experienced at this third campus combined with my connection with Sandra, forever changed the story of my teaching practice. I no longer sat back as a passive observer and watched the children I taught suffer indifference, undue prejudice, or denigration in any form. I was determined to give them the tools they needed to become respected and viable members of their school community. In this way, Fine's (1987) words resonated with me:

> First, there is substantial evidence that many students in this school, considered low in skill and motivation, were eager to choreograph their own learning, to generate a curriculum of lived experience and to engage in a participatory pedagogy. (p.138)

When the school community is not sensitive to what a child can contribute to his/her own education, connections between teacher and student that might have otherwise been made, are weakened. That is why it was necessary for me to find ways in which to highlight my students' natural abilities in order to encourage other teachers to appreciate these children of difference. And so, as I returned to the second campus where I had lived the "do as you are told" plot line, I returned with a new teaching story to live by, both for my students and for me. This time my students would help me to help them. They would play an active role in the learning process.

I spent the next seven years of my public school teaching at the second elementary school at which I taught, trying to help other teachers, and especially student teachers, to discover that our children should be valued for the knowledge and rich cultural background they brought with them instead of seen as deficient and requiring immediate remediation. I wanted to help my colleagues understand that the differences between these children from different backgrounds and white, middle class teachers, should be explored and used to make curriculum more relevant. The children needed to be respected for who they were and for the lived experience they brought to school.

I intentionally chose projects that put my children in the public spotlight in order to demonstrate that they were capable of exemplary work. One of the more ambitious projects in which my third graders participated, involved the participation of all the third grade children from across the district. It was a hands-on learning video in which my students were the instructors.

We often watched video tapes provided by the school district to teach a particular subject. After we learned what the district wanted us to learn, we talked about those who worked behind-the-scene in producing the videos. These workers had productive and successful lives that could conceivably offer plot lines for my children's lives. They could travel to new worlds that could be filled with many possibilities besides the worlds marred by gang related activities.

This story offered them possibility to change the life scripts they had been led to believe were theirs. They were no longer supposed to think of themselves as my "nice little Mexicans". Although they were used to being storied as marginalized, the level of success they wanted was not completely out of reach. They just had to avoid falling into the story of school failure which others directly link to their culture. Writers such as Lewis (1966) wrote that, in its strongest form, proponents of this position argue that poor children are trapped in a "culture of poverty" and succeed in school only if their many deficiencies are corrected and they are taught to behave in more traditionally mainstream ways. Small steps such as looking forward to exiting the bilingual program were seen by teachers on this school landscape as giant leaps of faith. These children would have to overcome great odds to change their lives, but, for every one who did, there was great cause for celebration.

Imagining Research Possibilities

As my shifting stories reveal, over the years I learned to value all children and young adults from differing backgrounds. I became concerned about creating relevant learning opportunities for all students, something that led in my last few years of teaching in public school settings, to my growing concern that childrens' needs were not being met in our lower socioeconomic designated elementary school. Many preservice and beginning teachers were experiencing difficulty because of their inability to understand children with backgrounds different from their own. I realized I would have to leave my classroom teacher position because I could no longer effect the kind of change I felt would benefit children in our school. I became convinced that teacher education needed to be reshaped in ways which would help new and experienced teachers grow more aware of, and to understand, difference expansively, whether these differences were racial, religious, gender, cultural, class, sexual orientation or ability.

Though this shift in positioning from elementary classroom teacher to teacher-educator researcher allowed me to explore much that I was afraid to previously explore, it has not been an experience completely free of hesitation or frustration. My doctoral journey has, at times, taken me to the depths of despair as I realized how difficult my continuing journey would be. However, what kept me at this work was knowing that my struggle did not go unrewarded as I now had a profound sense of direction, purpose, and passion in my life.

A Shifting Research Question

As part of my research, I developed a weekly conversation group in which four preservice teachers and myself shared teaching stories with one another. We began meeting before practicum, continued throughout their practicum and met after they completed practicum. In this conversation group, the preservice teachers and I learned about teaching and considered alternative ways to think about and behave towards children different from ourselves.

Three research purposes were to be addressed. First, given my own stories as a student, a teacher and a teacher educator, I wanted to understand how preservice teachers made connections with children different from themselves. I imagined that through the sharing of 'learning to teach' stories, both theirs and mine, I might come to such an understanding. Second, through storytelling, response, and story retelling (defined earlier in this chapter), I wanted to understand the process by which preservice teachers formed an appreciation of who students are and the knowledge they bring to school. Third, I wanted to understand the ways in which my narrative history might influence preservice teachers' teaching practices in working with children different from themselves.

By listening and responding to our stories in a conversational setting, our mutual goal was to take greater control over our own development as teachers. This enabled the rethinking and revision necessary in order to develop sensitive teaching practices that might support *all* students' learning.

As the study progressed, however, my original purposes began to shift. It was being shaped by the experiences of difference of each of the participants, and shifted as we all began to define the term "difference" in our own ways. This, in and of itself, proved significant in my thinking. When I first began to imagine possibilities for this inquiry, I, along with those who responded to the stories I shared in my narrative beginning, continuously attempted to squeeze my inquiry focus into a narrow construction of difference -- difference only as it related to culture. However, each time I engaged in these conversations, something just did not feel right. Only as I gradually awakened to the significance of the different ways in which the four preservice teachers and I were defining difference, did I realize that it was my desire to encourage others to understand difference expansively. It was an awakening that Greene (1995) writes about:

> Cultural background surely plays a part in shaping identity; but it does not determine identity. It may well create differences that must be honored; it may occasion styles and orientations that must be understood; it may give rise to tastes, values, even prejudices that must be taken into account.... Culture should never become an absolute, closing the person against the new culture surrounding her or him. (p. 163-164)

Rereading and reflecting further on the stories that brought me to beginning a doctoral program, enabled me to see that while cultural differences were woven across each of the narratives shared, there were also other, more subtle differences woven into these stories. Reading the work of so many (Bateson, 1989, 1994; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986; Connelly & Clandinin, (in press); Oakley, 1984),

I began to recognize that difference is not only located at the intersection between self and culture -- difference is, instead, a quality I have been continuously negotiating throughout my life, across multiple personal and professional landscapes. Often, my immediate sense of marginalization came as others read my visible qualities, most notably, my skin color, and then responded to this visible difference in varying ways. What was less visible were the ways in which this response may have been shaped by multiple other, less visible, differences. For example, in my story of my second grade Sunday school teacher, a differential thread woven into this story alongside our racial differences are our very different social differences. Differences in class and social positioning are also woven into my story of momentarily experiencing the lives of the migrant workers and of my grade seven year in school. Other differences, like the differences between my parents' intentions for my life and my own intentions, as well as my negotiation of teaching stories that were different from the dominant stories being perpetuated by my varying school districts, are also present in my narrative beginnings.

The term "difference" in this inquiry has been given meaning by each participant and is meant to be defined as broadly as possible. Our inquiry included what the preservice teachers identified as differences between themselves and the students they were teaching, differences that I became interested in, and how we made sense of those differences.

CHAPTER II

Situating the Research in the Literature

Questions To Consider

As I read the literature around teacher education and teacher knowledge, I found myself continuously asking four questions: How do we think about teacher knowledge? How do we educate teachers? How do we educate teachers to work with children of difference? How do I imagine my doctoral research?

How do we think about teacher knowledge?

As an undergraduate and graduate student in education, I was rarely encouraged to review research concerning multiple understandings of teacher education and teacher practice. There were no spaces apparent to me to explore teacher practice as a problem of knowledge and there seemed few connections to teacher knowledge. During my masters program, questions of teacher knowledge were also no more encouraged in discussions around teacher practice than they were when I was an undergraduate student. Once in the classroom, after completing my undergraduate program anything I needed to know was doled out on a need to know basis by the district in which I worked. There seemed to be an assumption that district policies and directives would change teacher practice in a straightforward, linear fashion. There was little input from teachers who ultimately would have to make these curriculum mandates their own. As I wrote in Chapter One, after a few years of teaching, I knew I could no longer passively accept district policies. I began to recognize I had this other kind of knowledge, and although I was unable to name it, I knew it was separate and very different from the imposed district policies. Realizing it would be difficult to shape district policy overtly, I soon discovered I could make it look as if I was enacting policy. Living a cover story, my practice appeared as though it followed these policies. I lived a cover story in the best interests of the children I taught.

As I experienced teacher education courses in both undergraduate and graduate work, the focus on the production of teachers rather than on the development of learners was prominent. Olson (1993) continues this thought which resonates with my teacher education experience.

> In this view of "knowledge as product", separate from the knower...students' experiences are seldom valued in themselves. Student experience is often compared to some baseline external to the student. Thus, the student as person is often overshadowed by the student-as-potential-teacher. There is little space for the meaning that the student makes, for the stories that they live and tell. (p. 11)

Olson's description fits with my experience in my undergraduate teacher education program. There were no places for me to tell my stories, no place for me to make personal connections between theory and practice. Later, as I began to teach, I attended many developmental sessions planned by the school district. Though some of the forums were promising, I was ultimately disappointed as I found that once again, they would not provide a space for me to make meaning of my practice.

Not until the last few years of my classroom practice did I begin to understand that teachers brought knowledge to their practice just as the children they were teaching do. This knowledge was tacit knowledge, knowledge of personal origin, experiential knowledge. Although I believed my knowing was knowledge of some kind, I was not thinking about it as "teacher knowledge," because, at that time, I did not have any theoretical notions of teacher knowledge. While I saw children as knowing, I also was not thinking about their knowledge as connected to the theory of knowledge. I believe I acknowledged knowing as coming out of people's experience but, in my view, neither it, nor I, were grounded theoretically. In the face of the theoretical mandates shaping my school contexts, I began to find working within school systems problematic. This tension prompted teachers like myself to reshape district policy, each in our own way, in the best interest of the children whom we were teaching.

However, as I described in Chapter One, as I began to make changes in my own practice in the elementary classroom, at that time, I was still not framing these changes as problems in teacher knowledge. Now as I retell these stories, I am thinking about this tension as a problem in legitimating teacher knowledge.

For years, I bought into the societal notion that teachers do not know on their own and would not be taken seriously without institutional backing. I believed I functioned in a "received knowledge" way. Belenky,Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986) define received knowing as a perspective from which women conceive of themselves only as capable of receiving or reproducing knowledge from all-knowing external authorities. They do not see themselves as capable of creating knowledge on their own. When I read their work I began to see that in my school contexts, I was often living a received knowledge story -- a story common for women, and common among teachers. Olson (1993), remembering her second year as a classroom teacher, speaks to this issue:

> By my second year I began to construct my own lessons, to speak and to

> listen to myself...sometimes I used the manuals. Sometimes I made up something new. However, when I made up something, I felt guilty because I was never sure if I was "teaching these students what they were supposed to learn." (p. 8)

Miller (1990) also writes about this situation. She writes:

> "...particularly for elementary teachers, the majority of whom are women, these expectations (of those above us in the hierarchy) are difficult for teachers to challenge because of the marginalization of their voices within the hierarchy of most school organizations" (p. 116).

I was not encouraged by my district to function as a constructor of knowledge, a positioning "in which...knowledge [is viewed] as contextual, [and where people] experience themselves as creators of knowledge" (Belenky,Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule, 1986, p.15). Although I do not believe that while I was teaching, I understood my knowing as "constructed knowledge," I now see as I retell my story that this is what was happening.

As I storied in Chapter One, before I began my doctoral work, I saw my place in the classroom. In the first few years of teaching, I viewed myself as a "good soldier" because I not only followed and implemented district directives but promoted them. In many ways I took what the district told me in a received knowing mode and I practiced it in my classroom allowing other voices and external truths to silence my own knowing (Belenky,1986). I began to work my way up the district ladder of success by being the model teacher those above me in the district hierarchy expected me to be. In this process, the story I was living encouraged others to follow my lead. If I believed I was knowledgeable as a teacher, it was only because the district awarded me with various kinds of recognition attesting to my expert regurgitation of *their* knowledge -- rewards such as: incentive grants for the classroom and the title of Teacher of the Year.

Since I always believed that following district expectations would expedite promotion, I was willing to believe that the knowledge required to accomplish this end, was also provided by the district. Whatever personal knowledge I embodied was inconsequential as far as district evaluations were concerned. However, as I moved from one district to another, I began to realize that a growing tension was developing between district policy and my awakening to my responsibility to the children I taught.

In Chapter One I spoke to this awakening that occurred as a result of deliberate prejudice aimed not only at the bilingual children I was teaching, but at their teachers. As I lived through this story I began to realize that I brought personal experience and knowledge into the classroom. The situation my students and I were involved in, required that I value the knowledge we were constructing. Starting in my own classroom, I used this knowledge to reshape district policy by keeping my childrens' welfare my primary concern. In her work with practicing teachers, Elbaz (1983) conceptualized teachers' knowledge as "practical knowledge." Within this framework, teacher knowledge was understood as practical, experiential, and shaped by their own unique purposes and intentions. As I lay Elbaz's work alongside the story I tell of my early years within this profession, I wonder if I was beginning to awaken to my own growing need to pay attention to my and my students' practical knowledge.

Returning to a university setting in 1995, this time as a doctoral student and instructor, it appeared as though this narrow, disembodied view of teacher knowledge had changed very little. As I taught undergraduate science methodology courses, I listened to undergraduate education students speak about the lack of connection they were experiencing between course work and actual practice. As tensions occurred between what they learned in their university theory and their practical experience in classrooms, they appeared as though they were confused and frustrated about what it meant to be a knowledgeable teacher. As I think back to these memories, I remember situations where some members of the course had already completed their practicum experience and responded resentfully to the theory I was teaching. In conversations I sometimes heard them say, "This is a waste of time, it will never work in the classroom." In the context of these conversations, the students seemed to be constantly negotiating notions of which kind of knowledge was most legitimate. Was it institutional knowledge which was given to them as a kind of received knowledge or knowledge they were continually constructing through a variety of experiences?

My desire to work with and to inquire into the experiences of preservice teachers grew out of these as well as my former teaching experiences. I wanted to work with preservice teachers in ways that allowed them to reflect upon their personal knowledge, the knowledge they were constructing, as they learned to teach. My intent was to help preservice teachers link theory with practice so that their own learning felt more relevant, enabling them to imagine themselves and their future students as "holders and makers of knowledge" (Connelly & Clandinin 1990, p. 3).

As I continued to read the literature in teacher education, I learned that I was not alone. In addition to Elbaz (1981), other researchers such as Carter (1990), Clandinin (1991), Olson (1993), and Schon (1983) were beginning to write about reflection in practice and linking theory with practice.

Previous to my doctoral work, I had not really thought about narrative experience in teaching. Therefore, the words written by Connelly and Clandinin

(1990) that "people lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives, whereas narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them and write narratives of experience" (p. 2) were very inviting. I really had not thought about narrative knowledge in this way. Thinking about knowledge narratively was new and exciting to me.

I also began thinking about the intersection of teacher knowledge, personal practical knowledge and narrative knowledge. The whole idea of narrative as connected to teaching and teacher practice led me to this narrative inquiry. When I arrived at the university as a doctoral student in teacher education, and was assigned to teach preservice teachers, I knew I wanted to do what Olson (1993) writes about. I wanted to make spaces for exploring the meaning preservice teachers were making.

This is why I am situating this inquiry around teacher knowledge as narrative and embodied. The literature around teacher knowledge revealed that there were several researchers who had studied this area around teachers' embodied knowledge, and while each describe knowledge construction somewhat differently, they fundamentally agree that knowledge is constructed.

I began with Dewey (1938) and his notion that knowledge is constructed through experience. Other readings led me to understand that Dewey's work had been examined by many researchers and described in just as many ways. Schon (1983) describes experiential knowing as "knowing-in-action". For example, he says "...our knowing is ordinarily tacit, implicit in our pattern of action...it seems right to say that our knowing is in our actions" (p. 49). Guba and Lincoln (1989) name tacit knowledge as embodied knowledge, experiential, valued, and purposeful. Van Manen (1986) describes constructed knowledge as pedagogical thoughtfulness while Elbaz (1981) speaks about embodied knowledge as "practical knowledge." Connelly and Clandinin (1988) name it "personal practical knowledge" which they describe as:

> A term designed to capture the idea of experience in a way that allows us to talk about teachers as knowledgeable and knowing persons. Personal practical knowledge is in the teacher's past experience, in the teacher's present mind and body, and in the future plans and actions. Personal practical knowledge is found in the teachers' practice. It is, for any one teacher, a particular way of reconstructing the past and the intentions of the future to deal with the exigencies of a present situation. (p. 25)

Reading Connelly and Clandinin's work, I realized that it had not been until the final few years of my classroom practice that I had experienced a working space that valued my personal practical knowledge. As I read more about personal practical knowledge, I thought about the last principal I worked with and how he began to make me aware of new possibilities as I reflected on my practice. As Connelly and Clandinin (1988) speak about personal practical knowledge, their words echo this principal's actions:

> ... for many of us it was an acknowledgement that had been missing as we lived out our lives in the prescriptive environments of schools where our stories as teachers had not been valued and the kind of knowledge we possessed had not been given voice. (p. 1)

It is this view of teacher knowledge, that I have drawn upon in my narrative inquiry with preservice teachers. Although I believe teacher knowledge is experiential knowledge which shapes teachers' practice, I do, however, still have many questions about teacher education. If other teacher educators adopt this view of teacher knowledge, I then pose these questions: What does adopting this view of teacher knowledge mean when it comes to educating today's teachers and how do teacher educators proceed with teacher education?

How do we educate teachers?

How do teacher educators go about moving from training teachers to working with teachers to help them construct and reconstruct their knowledge? This teacher education problem deserves more thought.

As I revisit my teacher education experience, teacher training based on "expert" knowledge seemed to be what, and how, I was taught, at least that is the way I interpreted it at the time. I remember feeling as if I was being filled with information the institution believed was important for teachers to know. I sometimes compared it to learning a new language. My instructor was sure to teach me basic grammatical rules and to ask me to practice short disconnected or nonsensical sentences in order to practice those rules. However, I believed that, just as in teaching, it was important to make learning relevant.

As I look back, I believe this idea of making learning relevant was partly my mother's influence. In Chapter One, I described some of the ways she sought to enrich my life. I described how she taught me one lesson or another by providing a variety of experiences. Her teaching definitely fell under the category of experiential learning. Every vacation was a field trip. I think it was her way of making learning relevant for my brother and me. When I began teaching I began to draw on all the knowledge my mother had encouraged through experiential learning. Throughout my teaching career, this thread of making learning relevant which began as loose strands, over the years, has developed into a strongly woven cable.

Even though I was determined to follow district directives to the letter in my first few years of teaching, these loose strands of relevance were beginning to take shape in my classroom teaching. I was already beginning to think that I should attempt to make the curriculum relevant for the children I taught.

In the beginning, it was as limited as bringing in live plants and setting up an aquarium for science. Later, as I began to realize relevancy was key to learning, I did many more things to make the curriculum relevant. I began to ask the children how they would use the skills we were learning in their daily lives. For example, when we studied the concept of making change in math, I organized a trip to the local mall. Everyone brought a set amount of money and we went shopping at the Dollar Store. We enjoyed ourselves, bought things we needed, and learned how to make change. Another math lesson involved fractions and this time we measured ingredients for food with which they were familiar and, for an added treat, made a dessert of waffles that most were unfamiliar with.

When, as a cooperating teacher, I began to work with student teachers in the classroom and later as an instructor at the University of Alberta, relevancy once again became an important issue. Just as I promoted the idea that the children I taught brought personal practical knowledge with them, knowledge which should be acknowledged, I believed the same to be true in the case of preservice teachers.

Carter's (1990) work supports my thinking:

> For the most part, attention in teacher education has traditionally been focused on what teachers need to know and how they can be trained, rather than on what they actually know or how that knowledge is acquired. The perspective, in other words has been from the outside, external to the teachers who are learning and the processes by which

> they are educated. (p. 291)

I was trained in the traditional way in my teacher education courses. Carter's definition is a perfect description of my own experiences. As I began to think about my student teaching experience and my experience working with student teachers in the classroom, I knew I wanted to approach teacher education with my teacher education students differently. I wanted them to realize that the experiences they brought with them would shape their practice. As I set about to conduct my own doctoral study I believed we could explore these personal experiences by telling, writing and responding to stories of our experiences in and out of school. As a teacher educator at the university, I started to recognize autobiographical work as important in the education of preservice and in-service teachers. Paying attention to their lived histories helped them to understand how their personal practical knowledge had been acquired. Clandinin (1993) addresses the issue of autobiographical stories when she writes how they:

> ...highlight the tensions each of us experienced as we lived out our personal stories embedded within the cultural and institutional stories of teacher education, schools, and universities fostering reflection on the ways individuals and institutions live and tell stories of teacher education. (p.14)

In my teacher education courses I built in autobiographical work by asking my students to reflect on their own elementary learning experiences and to share those memories and images, good and bad. In order for the students to feel safe, this was done at first with a partner and later when it appeared they were more comfortable with the process, they shared with the rest of the students at their table. The majority of responses I received from the students was that this was a welcomed change from lecture courses which asked for little discussion concerning personal connections with the theory they were being taught.

Favorable response from the teacher education students I taught led me to want to do more autobiographical work. As I started to work on my research, I wanted to focus more on learning from autobiographical stories. My intent was that the preservice teachers participating in the doctoral study would be able to continually construct and reconstruct their personal practical knowledge as they worked through their practica. This would help them make connections between what they were learning in their course work and what was happening in their practice. I wanted to be a narrative researcher working with my students, describing our lives, giving us a space where we might find it possible to better understand that our storied lives shaped our learning possibilities. I hoped that by creating such a space we would come to understand that our knowledge was our own, experiential knowledge, embodied in who we are as people and enacted in our practice (Clandinin & Connelly,1988, 1995; Grumet,1988).

I structured my doctoral study much like the alternative program Clandinin, Davies, Hogan and Kennard (1993) describe:

> We imagined this process would be ongoing throughout the practicum year with constant opportunity for reflection-in and on-action. The participants would continually construct and reconstruct personal practical knowledge as they engaged in practice. Their ongoing practice would be the framework for understanding theories and for constructing and reconstructing practical knowledge. (p. 8)

Since I adopted the view that teacher knowledge was narrative, constructed and embodied, I designed the study with Clandinin, Davies, Hogan and

Kennard's words in mind. I wanted to see what would happen with a group of students if I made a deliberate space for reflection. I wanted them to have the opportunity to share all of their stories and to have ongoing response to their stories throughout their practicum.

Trusting relationships are key to the kinds of stories preservice and in-service teachers are willing to share. At the beginning of my doctoral study, remnants of the instructor's institutional expectations were visible. It was at this time, that I decided I could not function as the university facilitator for my four participants as issues of evaluation appeared to occupy a great deal of our conversational time. Other researchers like Clandinin, Davies, Hogan and Kennard (1993) also encountered this issue of evaluation as well. In Learning To Teach, Teaching To Learn, Kennard (p.169) speaks about issues of evaluation as she worked with her student teacher. "Seen through Lynn's student eyes, I held a power, a power that she had learned could and would be wielded through evaluation" (p.169). Olson (1993) also described her relationship with former students who subsequently become her doctoral study participants: "An atmosphere of trust between the students and myself was necessary. In order for students to be willing to share their stories openly, they needed to know that I valued what they had to say" (p. 42). Olson continued developing her relationship with her participants by accommodating their schedules and meeting with them in friendly, familiar settings. That is why I asked not to take on the role of facilitator/evaluator along with the role of researcher. This way I could be the participant observer I wanted to be and not be directly connected with the institutional narrative. I could not let the fear of evaluation limit the kinds of conversations and connections that might otherwise be made.

As a teacher educator I wanted to begin with what teachers already knew by doing more autobiographical work, and by providing spaces for research conversations in trusting places. In order to facilitate this kind of teaching and learning, experiential learning must follow. Dewey (1938) speaks to this quality of experiential learning when he says we live and are what we experience. Our knowledge of the world and of ourselves in the world emerges from our experiences. As I read Dewey's words, I was again reminded that learning must be made relevant. The learner, whether elementary school child, preservice teacher or in-service teacher, should be able to make connections between what they are learning and their everyday lives. In my teacher education courses I tried to help my students think about making learning relevant for their future students by making learning fun and relevant through the course work.

In my doctoral study, I tried to make learning relevant for participating students by encouraging them to talk about what was happening in their university courses and in their practica. I wanted their understandings and learning to be based on what they considered relevant.

Other researchers also share this view of teacher education. As everyone in the study tried to understand their lives as teachers of children, and responded by telling stories, I was reminded of the work of Noddings (1986):

> It seems odd to talk of teacher education in terms of modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation instead of content, selection of students, exit tests, and credentials. All of these must be considered, of course, but their consideration in isolation from frameworks that describe the kind of communities we intend to build, the sort of people we want to produce, and the ways in which we will interact can only perpetuate the malaise

> now widely felt in education. (p. 505)

While I was conducting my doctoral study, it appeared that the participants appreciated having a space in which they trusted one another enough to be able to tell *all* their stories. Carter (1993) states that " 'the most vigorous line of work in our field today is that focused on teachers' personal stories' which are framed 'within a context of a teacher's life history' " (p.7). Many times during the group conversations I had with the Conversation Group, they asked me how I handled a particular situation and I responded with one of my teacher stories. Noddings and Witherell (1991) also speak to drawing upon story in narrative inquiries:

> Stories are powerful research tools. They provide us with a picture of real people in real situations, struggling with real problems...they invite us to speculate on what might be changed and with what effect.... Most important, they invite us to remember that we are in the business of teaching, learning and researching to improve the human condition. (p. 280)

Elbaz, (1991 p. 3) shares a common belief, as does Bateson (1989), that "storytelling is fundamental to the human search for meaning" (p. 34), but her sense of teachers' knowledge as being "ordered by story", therefore by experience, offers a conceptual shift in the theory/practice relationship -- a shift that validates and recognizes teachers' personal practical knowledge.

This brings me back to the question of how do teacher educators go about moving from training teachers to working with teachers to help them construct and reconstruct their knowledge? As a teacher educator I want to move away from the "traditional" way of "training" teachers. I want teachers to realize that the experiential knowledge they bring is legitimate. I believe that through autobiographical work they may come to realize that their knowledge of the world and themselves emerges from those experiences. Noddings' (1986) notion of "fidelity in teaching" is helpful in my thinking on creating a caring community. Imagining dialogue, practice, and confirmation as central to teacher education programs, reshapes classroom contexts and the relationship between teacher educators and preservice teachers. My hope is to demonstrate how teachers convey their caring by encouraging other teachers to make autonomous decisions in their student's best interests. I want to help teachers understand that they can help one another live out a practice of caring.

A practice of caring is absolutely necessary when it concerns teaching children of different backgrounds. These children and their families look to the school and its teachers to help them learn how to succeed in a world of difference. This brings me to my next question: How do we educate teachers to teach children of difference?

How do we educate teachers to work with children of difference?

I have always taught in what I believe to be a context of difference. When I began my classroom practice, I was classified as a "bilingual" teacher, not a "regular" teacher and as I remember it, I was treated differently than the regular teachers in my school. In other schools, I was different because I practiced resistance and rebelled against the status quo. Later, I considered myself different when I was one of the few teachers in my elementary school who learned to work within the system to reshape the curriculum by seeing my own teacher knowledge as legitimate and using my past experiences as meaningful reference points.

When student teachers were assigned to me in the elementary classroom, I began to notice three things. First, as experienced by Oakes, (1996) their lack of experience with difference appeared to result in lowered expectations. She writes about how schools tend to compound the disadvantages of children who are different. Well intentioned teachers did not want to add to the burdens they believed their students struggled with, and therefore, expecting less from them was one way to ease their burdens. A somewhat more prejudiced notion some of the student teachers I supervised seemed to hold, was that these children simply did not have the intellectual capacity necessary to meet required competency levels.

Second, it appeared that some preservice teachers had a limited concept of how to approach difference. Cochran-Smith (1995) speaks to this dilemma as she writes about preparing teachers to work with a diverse student population. "Teachers who are inquirers do not have to...wait for...school administrations to tell them '*the* teaching strategies' that are most effective for '*the* culturally diverse learner' " (p. 520). This prescription or knowledge received from an external source often seemed to be what my student teachers were waiting for.

Third, the way some of the student teachers seemed to make sense of difference was to not address difference in the classroom at all. Berlak (1996), Cochran-Smith (1995), Paley (1989), and Sleeter (1995) have written how some teachers unable to make sense of difference, frame their dilemma as "color-blindness". For instance, Berlak writes:

> On the one hand, the "color-blindness" view of "race" ignores the fact that different groups have histories, traditions, and unique qualities that should be celebrated and preserved; it ignores the effects of various forms of White supremacy, Eurocentrism, and language oppression. Therefore, we must acknowledge differences between groups. (p. 95)

Paley (1991) in White Teacher examined her beliefs and attitudes when she first taught African American kindergartners. She alternately practiced a color-blind and then color-centric focus in her teaching. As she struggled toward making her practice one that invited all children's learning, it was only through discussion with the children in her classroom and their families, her White colleagues, reading and self-reflection, that she could initiate changes in her theories and practices.

Like Paley, I began to wonder what else I could do to help preservice and in-service teachers appreciate who these students were and the knowledge they brought to school. I wanted to prepare preservice teachers to teach children whose sociocultural backgrounds were different from their own. Going back to the institution that had not encouraged me to be the teacher I ultimately became, seemed like the place I needed to be in order to make the most difference. After learning a little about narrative inquiry, I hoped through the retelling of my teaching stories and by listening to my undergraduate students' own classroom experiences, we could explore and reconsider the stories which had shaped our learning to teach children of difference.

This urgency to help preservice teachers acknowledge difference, occurred as I read what researchers like Ladson-Billings (1995) write, "...by the year 2000 it is estimated that 85% of the nations' teachers will still be White, mainstream and largely female working with students who differ from them racially, culturally, and in social class status" (p. 747).

I became more aware of this quality of the teaching profession in my home state during the last few years of classroom practice. I was teaching grade 3 in a school designated as lower socioeconomic and whose student population was mostly Hispanic and African-American children. The majority of student teachers who were assigned to this school were White, mainstream and largely female. They considered their assignment at this school to be a black mark as far as future employment was concerned. As one White student teacher after another was assigned to the bilingual classes I was teaching, I began to wonder how their presence would shape my students' potential for learning. Yet, at that time, I was not sure how to go about investigating this wonder any further.

It was not until my doctoral work that I began to understand this wonder more fully. Reading Gomez and Tabachnick (1992) who emphasized the importance of "telling teaching stories" as a way to get preservice students to reflect on their practicum experiences in classrooms filled with children from different backgrounds. I was drawn back to my former experiences with White student teachers. Like Clandinin, Davies, Hogan, and Kennard (1993), Gomez and Tabachnick believe that this autobiographical sharing helped their students to understand the complexity of teaching students from backgrounds different from their own. In both these studies, over time and in a supportive setting, preservice teachers told stories to one another in order to gain different perspectives and better understand their complex interactions with children of diverse backgrounds. Gomez (1996) believed, as I do, that:

> providing a space for supportive response can help teachers puzzle through their behaviors towards different students; question accepted schooling practices; unpack the social, economic, and institutional forces against which children and their families struggle; and devise new ways to teach that invite all children to learn" (p. 166).

The lack of spaces which seemed available for this kind of interaction appeared to be limited as well as limiting. Providing such a space for preservice teachers to "tell teaching stories" is something I, as a teacher educator, want to encourage. Perhaps the placing of preservice teachers as cohorts in the same schools would encourage a sense of community. I believe the participants in my doctoral study experienced an intense feeling of community which helped them to form bonds that led to a supportive network throughout the practicum period and to a lesser extent beyond their shared university context. Sharing conversations with teacher researchers and teacher educators would also help to broaden the conversation around learning to teach and understanding difference.

Sleeter (1995) helped me think of this need for reflection concerning difference as I read her words about the need to understand the nature of multicultural education. She wrote:

> Regardless of how little White preservice and in service teachers believe they know about cultural diversity, I have come to realize that they bring a well-developed world view about the nature of society and inequality which is based on their life experiences and interpreted through dominant modes of thought. Their world view provides guidance as they make decisions about how and what to teach; and it serves as a filter as they interpret multicultural content. (p. 17)

Multicultural education is concerned with inequality among groups. It does not, however, frame these inequalities in the negative context which the mainstream seems to stress. Multicultural education focuses on strengths of oppressed groups such as their cultural resources and how oppressed groups cope with oppression. Preservice and in-service teachers who are members of the mainstream seem to bring a viewpoint that is opposite to that held by multicultural educators. These mainstream teachers view schools and other vehicles that lead to success as "fair". They seem to believe that children and families of oppressed groups *can* succeed if they just try hard enough. "The impact of systematic and persistent discrimination is a very difficult concept for most white teachers to grasp, since they do not experience racial discrimination themselves" (Sleeter, 1995, p. 20). This builds on Gomez and Tabachnick's notion of the need for preservice teachers to share their stories in a response group that is diverse. This moves "telling teaching stories" beyond storytelling and to the next step of, story retelling, enabling growth and understanding of difference that the preservice teachers are encountering.

Sleeter (1995) described the implementation of activities in her multicultural teacher education course which "raised awareness that institutional and individual discrimination exist" (p. 26). She believed that community-based field experiences are an essential component of multicultural education. Without the community based field experience component, students tended to comprehend material only at an intellectual level. Although working in a community setting dominated by another sociocultural group helped the students begin to confront their own fears, misconceptions and ignorance, it only began to scratch the surface of their understanding of the impact of confronting discrimination on a daily basis.

Believing that community-based field experiences helped her students learn to listen, rather than dismiss other peoples' discussions of discrimination and in the process to become more aware of their own behavior and beliefs, Sleeter (1995) described how she wanted her students to admit that they were not "colorblind" when they dealt with their feelings about where their ultimate placement (a community setting which was different from their own) might be. She wrote:

> Most Whites profess to be colorblind, but in doing so, Whites cover over the meanings they attach to race, rather than actually dissociating race from meaning. Trying to be colorblind also means denying the existence of racial boundaries Whites usually do not cross. If one asks a White audience how many of them have ever chosen to live in a neighborhood or attend a school... in which the majority of the people are not White, few hands go up. (p. 22)

Also linked with Sleeter, Gomez & Tabachnick's thoughts on multicultural education, Cochran-Smith (1995) proposed:

> that what we need are generative ways for prospective teachers, experienced teachers, and teacher educators alike to work together in communities of learners - to explore and reconsider their own assumptions, understand the values and practices of families and cultures that are different from their own, and construct pedagogy that takes these into account. (p. 495)

Cochran-Smith (1995) contrasts the images of teaching and learning in a lesson plan-centered linear approach to teaching and learning in an inquiry-centered approach. She draws on responses provided by student teachers involved in a teacher research project situated in an urban setting named START. Describing Project START (Student Teachers as Researching Teachers) as a fifth year master's program in elementary education at the University of Pennsylvania, she tells how the project centered around a year-long student teaching experience at the same school and classroom site where student teachers, cooperating teachers, and supervisors met weekly as teacher-researcher groups.

During their year long practica, student teachers wrote personal narrative essays about the experiences that shaped their views of race, culture, and difference. They also wrote critical essays designed to promote thoughtful responses to program readings in order to learn how to construct and confront the dilemmas of cultural diversity.

Student teacher supervisors and cooperating teachers believed that it was important to provide opportunities for student teachers to learn experientially about students and their families, and the surrounding community. This helped student teachers "understand what was going on in their school from the points of view of participants rather than simply making judgments about teachers' or parents' actions based on their own frames of reference." (p. 506). Student teachers were also encouraged to examine how materials, instructional practices, and participation structures limit or support children's language learning opportunities and if there were possibilities for the children to experience something other than reading group instruction and being grouped by ability.

Conversation, narrative awareness and living in contexts of difference are common threads found in Cochran-Smith's (1995) work on cultural diversity. Learning to teach children, especially children of different backgrounds requires that the teaching community share their experiences in conversation with one another in a response group drawing together people with differing narrative histories. She wrote:. "As teacher educators struggling to promote a discourse of diversity among our students, we also need to open up this discourse among teacher-education faculty and staff and to examine our own efforts to teach those who are like and not like us" (Cochran-Smith, 1995, p. 521).

In 1995, when I began my doctoral program in a large university setting, I was assigned teaching responsibilities. My assumption was, that at this university and others of similar stature, surely there had been ample research conducted on the subject of teaching children different from ourselves. I imagined participating in discourse among teacher education faculty around the issue of teaching those who are not like us. This was not the case for my teacher education students or me. What I heard, and what the students seemed to experience were teacher education courses in which equity and diversity received only cursory attention. I am also suggesting that every teacher education course should include a multicultural component focusing not only on minority groups but all people. As Ghosh (1996) reflected, "education must prepare white students for a multicultural society and non-white students for a society in which they are [still] likely to encounter discrimination"(p. 2). I am concerned that many teacher education courses I have been witness to, appear not to have even acknowledged the dramatic shift in demographics in the elementary classroom. Banks (1991) is also concerned about this issue:

> Thus an effective teacher education policy for the 21st century must include as a major focus the education of all teachers, including teachers of color, in ways that will help them receive the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to work effectively with students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social class groups. (pp.135 -136)

I tried to make the methods course relevant for the undergraduates I taught by sharing teaching stories of my experience in schools with students from dissimilar backgrounds. I wanted to awaken these undergraduate students to the possibility that children of difference might experience the same disconnectedness in elementary school that undergraduates often experience in university settings. Many times my efforts to acknowledge difference through curriculum adaptation were met with a lack of understanding. By this I mean that their more common response was one which reflected the evaluative nature of institutional knowledge. It seemed their questions rarely centered around children at all. The question which appeared to be more important and frequently asked was: "Will this be on the next exam?"

Later, as I worked with the participants in my study, their role was still perceived as receivers of institutional knowledge instead of knowledge they were continually constructing and which might lead them to be more thoughtful about their classroom practice and their responsibility to children in their classrooms different from themselves. Many times it seemed that difference in the classroom was not a reality they were prepared to acknowledge and therefore, this quality of classroom life seemed to be a secondary concern.

This brings me back to my earlier questions: What is our view of teacher knowledge? How do we educate teachers? How do we educate teachers to teach children of difference? Olson (1993) has similar wonders and writes:

> [We can] come to new understandings of the stories we learn to live and tell about teaching and teacher education. Becoming more aware of the sacred stories that are pointed to in the mundane stories that are told can help us tell and live more collaborative stories as an educational community. (p. 35)

Together, the students I worked with, and I, planned to explore learning to teach and to consider the different possibilities of how we interact with children of different backgrounds. I created a space in which we encouraged each other to share stories of teaching which were important to us. Many of our conversations included tensions of our views of what we considered good teaching and what those above us in the institutional hierarchy believed was good teaching. These conversations frequently included discussions around teacher knowledge, teacher education and teaching in today's classrooms filled with children from different backgrounds.

It is in this context that I situate my work. As a teacher educator I want to continue creating spaces where my students and I can explore learning to teach and understanding how our personal practical knowledge shapes our practice and beliefs when we teach those who are not like us.

CHAPTER III

Situating The Research Methodologically

> The study of narrative...is the study of the ways humans experience the world. This...notion translates into the view that education is the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories; teachers and learners are storytellers and characters in their own and other's stories." (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990, p. 2)

Participant Selection

I purposely sought out former students from my teacher education classes to be participants in this inquiry. These students were individuals with whom I had already entered into relationship. It was important to me that we were no longer total strangers to each other as I believed this would help the group develop the rapport necessary to develop meaningful conversations by constructing knowledge through "genuine dialogue" (Noddings, 1991). As I read how other researchers invited participants into their inquiries, (Davies, 1996; Hollingsworth 1992; Olson, 1993), Davies' (1996) thoughts helped me to express what I was feeling. She wrote: "My need for a setting where I feel comfortable, my need to be in relationship with the teachers in my study and to be with teachers who believe in team teaching...." (p. 58). This was how she was thinking and feeling about negotiating an inquiry space where she believed she and her participants would feel comfortable. I wanted to achieve something similar. I wanted to construct my research with others beginning with and building upon "relationships among researchers and practitioners, constructed as a caring community" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990, p. 4).

Our inquiry group was composed of four preservice teachers- three women and one man, all of whom exhibited exemplary participation skills in the course I taught and me. Their participation skills included the willingness to try new ideas, the ability to work well with others and the desire to listen to teaching stories in order to make their learning more relevant when necessary. In the class these individuals had taken on roles when necessary as leaders by asking probing questions and by shaping conversations about how they were trying to make sense of their assignments and university based learning. At the time of their selection, I also believed that they were a fair representation of the students who comprised the student body in the education courses I taught and others I had observed. By this I mean that the teacher education courses I taught were filled with a majority of white, female students from working or middle class backgrounds.

Together, I hoped we would explore learning to teach and consider differing possibilities for interacting with children of different backgrounds. I asked field services to place these four participants into a cohort assigned to one school. I felt that being placed in the same school would provide opportunities for their trust and relationships with one another to continue to develop. Their relationships would be invaluable as we came together for our conversations. I also hoped that if they were together in the same school, they would be able to provide immediate response to each other whenever they needed a space for reflection. I remembered that in the courses I taught, it appeared as if the students seemed to enjoy each other's company. Walking into the classroom gave me a sense that it was a club meeting instead of a course. It seemed that way with the four participants. By having them together as a cohort for practicum, I hoped they would continue a feeling of living in relationship and to be helpful, and responsive to one another.

Throughout the remainder of my dissertation I refer to the participants as the "Conversation Group". It felt more natural referring to the group in this manner rather than "the cohort" or even "the study group".

Prior to their agreement to participate in the study, I spoke to each of them over a period of approximately three months (November 96-February 97). We spoke about the study and how important their roles would be in this endeavor. They each agreed that they would be able to spend time together on a regular basis. We agreed to meet individually and as a group over the following academic year. We met as a group twelve times between April 1997 and April 1998. During this same time period, I met individually with each of them five times. Our individual sessions became necessary so that I could clarify transcript information and because, after the practicum period, it was difficult to meet as a group more than once a month.

Narrative Beginnings With The Conversation Group: Our First Conversation

While I invited the four participants to become part of the study in February 1997, scheduling a group meeting was problematic. The result was that we were only able to meet once as a group before the semester ended. This conversational session took place in April, 1997. Although I had been eager to begin the conversations as a group and was disappointed we would not meet again until September, I did meet with each participant individually in March,1997 before our first group session in April.

The first of these individual conversations felt more like interviews than conversations. I believed this happened because we met in my office which may have shaped our time together to seem somewhat formal (instructor-student) instead of as collaborative researchers. It was also the first time I recorded our conversation and took notes. In describing her own experiences as an interviewer, Oakley (1981) writes:

> It becomes clear that, in most cases, the goal of finding out about people through interviewing is best achieved when the relationship of interviewer and interviewee is non-hierarchical and when the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship (p. 41).

Over time, and as we came together both one on one and within our conversation group, these individual conversations began to feel less like interviews and more like conversations as we grew to understand more about one another.

When we met for our first group conversation in April, I wanted to make this conversation as comfortable as possible. A room was available on the same floor as my office making it easy to locate and convenient for me to make last minute preparations. As I surveyed the room, it seemed sterile and unfriendly, so I set out to make it appear more friendly. Choosing a table close to the door, I covered it with a table cloth from my home. The group had agreed to meet for at least a couple of hours, so I provided snacks of pretzels, dried fruit and M&Ms. This snack was wrapped in yellow cellophane wrap and ribbon which helped brighten up the room. Only when the room was ready with two tape recorders positioned on the table for optimum reception, was I ready to welcome the group to our first conversation. I also wanted to provide a small treat for their time and participation and this came in the form of a Kindersurprise. A Kindersurprise is an egg-shaped chocolate shell candy with a toy surprise inside. Some of the Kindersurprise toys require assembly. I thought that helping each other assemble a Kindersurprise might help break the ice should that become necessary. As it turned out, it was necessary to use the Kindersurprises as icebreakers. As they each opened up their Kindersurprise and found that some assembly was required, I watched what I realize now, was the first of many times they would come to one another's aid. The instructions included were minimal and they all started laughing nervously as they each tried to assemble their toy so that it appeared that they knew what they were doing. At that moment, I was worried that my idea of the Kindersurprise ice breaker designed to promote collaboration had instead become another form of continuing competition which appeared so prevalent among their experiences as undergraduates. I started to offer my assistance but, as they began to finish the easier toys, they began to help each other with the more difficult assemblage. At that moment, I knew there had been a break through. If even one of the four withdrew from living out a story of competition and offered assistance at this early stage of the study, I believed that, perhaps, we could learn to live a more collaborative story within the conversation group.

Although we all knew each other from the course experience, we were still all a bit nervous. I reminded everyone that this first get together should be considered as a get to know one another and to become more comfortable using a conversational research format than an interview format. While I would have been able to compile more information from a structured set of questions in which my researcher intentions were uppermost (Thompson,1978), I believed their responses would have been superficial in nature and would not promote the reflection and interaction I so deeply wanted to happen during the study.

I had been introduced to research methodology using a conversation format in a course I took on narrative inquiry. In this course, individuals wrote and shared personal narratives as part of the process of learning. I came to understand this process as less focused on information gathering or the right answers to questions emerging from the stories being shared (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994) and more focused on engaging in the individual and collective process of living, telling, reliving and retelling stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994; 1998). This course encouraged me to think about the stories I shared as I wrote them, told them and listened to others respond to them. I slowly came to new understandings of each story. This was what I wanted to recreate with the Conversation Group. It was possible that they might not have a chance to retell some of their stories but they would have the group's response in their thoughts. These responses might eventually help them come to new understandings of one of their stories.

When I thought about the kind of study I was doing and what methodology would best help me understand the way these preservice teachers were coming to a new understandings of teaching, I felt that engaging in conversation around stories would help to uncover both their experiences and how they were making sense of them. Many other researchers have drawn upon a conversational approach to research. For example, Hollingsworth (1992) wrote about her dinner meeting conversations with her group of preservice and beginning teachers as "collaborative conversations" where "the safety of our continuing relationship provided an occasion for raising questions, sharing the passion and frustration of what we were learning in our own voices" (p. 287) and Belenky, Bond and Weinstock (1997) wrote: When people talk and listen to each other with care, trying to understand each person in the person's own terms, they tend to develop caring relationships. (p. 80)

I encouraged them to share whatever they wanted, keeping in mind that there were five of us in all and our time (two hours), which at first seemed like more than enough time, was probably going to fly by. Jarod declined my invitation to speak first by saying "I'd have more impact if I went last." In our earlier individual conversation, he seemed to be anxious about sharing his memories of his schooling, since they were almost all, what he thought others would define, as negative in nature. I volunteered to go first, although I feared that what I told and how I shared might limit what they might have wanted to share.

Kacee saved the day and volunteered to speak first. She shared a story of being away from home for the first time and she also talked about some of her elementary school experiences. She voiced her concern about how some teaching practices can feel as though they were " ... being forced down my throat..." and how she did not know what she could do "to fix that". Alyssha wanted to know why Kacee was going to school away from home. Kacee responded by saying that she "liked the program [at the University of Alberta] much better, because to me...I have so much more preparation before I go into my placement next term...". I asked if the job situation was any more promising in her home province than Alberta? She answered that she believed it was about the same and that if a beginning teacher was willing to go north or to small rural areas, there were jobs available. Kacee shared how she had ended her story by remembering that her father suggested she go to the United States to school and then get a job there since it appeared there were many more jobs available. Kacee responded to this suggestion by saying she had no desire to leave Canada.

Alyssha volunteered to speak next and pronounced her first and last name for everyone. She commented on how everyone seemed to have trouble pronouncing her name, especially her last name and wondered what her future students might call her. We found out that her name would be changing in the next year as she planned to marry in July,1998. Alyssha was not sure the name change would actually help. She continued by sharing her story of leaving Poland:

> In December 1981 my family left Poland for an immigration camp in Austria. Our reasons for leaving are all linked to politics...the day we were leaving I did not know we were leaving for good, but rather my parents had told me were going for a vacation (no one could trust a child to keep such an important secret. If the authorities found out we were leaving the country for good, the consequences would be grave.) Our most memorable experience occurred when our car ran out of gas only twenty miles from the Austrian border. Since that road wasn't frequently traveled the first people we came across to help us were smugglers (men working for the black market). My Tata (father) made a deal with them and gave them $100 Canadian to get us one can of fuel and they could keep the change for their troubles. They disappeared for hours and my Mama broke down fearing we would never cross the border. But eventually they did come. They said they returned not to help my parents, but to help their child.
>
> I remember my first sight of the immigration camp. It is a sight that shall forever haunt me. People were sprawled out in a long hallway, due to the fact that they had run out of beds. It was disgusting to see what some of those people were doing in full view of others...it ranged from men beating their wives to street women crawling on top of men. Our eleven months in Austria were terribly difficult. We spent a great deal of that

> time living in a one room apartment, no toilet, no bath or shower.
> My mama would bathe me in the sink we had..which we considered to be a luxury.
>
> November 1982, we arrived in Canada. I distinctly remember the taxi ride to our motel. It took us down a hill which gave us perfect view of the downtown lights of Christmas. It was spectacular! Those lights in a darkened night were our hope for a bright tomorrow.

This was Alyssha's story of her coming to a new home in Canada.

She continued her sharing by telling a story of attending ten to twelve different elementary and junior high schools because her parents had to move from place to place in order to secure work. This moving about appeared to have limited Alyssha's ability from forming any bonds with other children her age. Jarod asked if this "...made you into a loner?" Alyssha responded by saying, "Not a loner, independent, I'd say." She moved on with her story and said for as long as she could remember, she had always wanted to be a teacher. She concluded her story by sharing her first negative experiences on a school landscape.

> Like coming into a new school, that language barrier doesn't really let you fit in with all the English speaking children so I did kinda hang out with a little group of Polish kids...speaking Polish we could share our problems...after the teachers yelled at us to stop it, we sat there in silence, so not only was I not learning language, but there was no socialization whatsoever....
> (Group Conversation 4/97)

Marjo was next in sharing as everyone had agreed Jarod could go last.

Marjo began by telling us a story of having lived in several cities in Canada and the United States. Marjo and her family had the opportunity to live and visit many places. This was because her father worked in the oil business. Part of her education, therefore, was experienced in the United States. She spoke about the difference in how patriotism was displayed in the States as compared to Canada. She has pleasant memories of reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, singing patriotic songs and delighting in Independence Day celebrations. She commented about the differences she experienced in displays of patriotism between the United States and Canada by saying:

> It was just one of those things, but then when you come back here, it was kind of weird that no one is as patriotic as down in the States. Like for instance, their fourth of July is nuts down there, it's fun, but Canada, what do we do?
>
> (Group Conversation 4/97)

Kacee responded by saying "I think the States do so much, we're sick of it!" This statement was followed by laughter and the following comment from me. "We do enough for both countries!"

Marjo shared that other differences she had encountered were in the subject areas of math and geography. She shared how she had to learn several subjects twice, a United States version and a Canadian version: "...when I came back it was hard to do that.." Marjo also described her geography lessons as egocentric. She remembered learning very little about other countries and provincial geography was totally foreign to her when she retuned to Canada. Overall though, she recalled that her memories of elementary school were good, if uneventful. Marjo continued her sharing by telling about the privileges she and her sisters enjoyed as they were growing up. Marjo and her two sisters were involved in many extracurricular and recreational activities. When she was in Junior High she visited London on a school sponsored trip. Later, when her father was working overseas in Oman, Marjo and her sisters visited him over the Christmas holidays. Marjo's stories seemed to be punctuated with apologetic hesitations. It appeared to me that she did not feel comfortable sharing more than the most minimal information about herself.

When it was Jarod's turn to share, he began by saying, "I'm glad you guys went first, because now I'm going to change my format." This statement was followed by group laughter. Jarod then began to talk about himself by giving a summary statement of what seemed to him, and appeared to me, as a list of failures he endured in his life. This list began by his remembering how he was placed in special education by grade three and how "...the concept of riding on a city bus was scary..." as he rode the bus everyday to the new school where he was assigned. He remembered his special education experience as a series of "scare tactics," unlike how he understood special education was now being taught. He said:

> In elementary school, to control me, they threatened me. Scare tactics. I lived in fear. I hated school and I hated teachers... I joined the armed forces and I wanted to be a supplies officer but that didn't happen because I didn't know then, but I had dyslexia...what I had to do involved lots of numbers, but the numbers were backwards! I was just constantly beaten down, beaten down...I'm not going to buy into that, otherwise I would not be able to live with myself knowing that I was taken out of this nice, I mean taken...like in grade three, I got sent to this other school [where I had] no friends....

Responding to Jarod, Kacee asked if he lived with both of his parents during this time. This seemed to shift his mood as he then shared a story of his father.

> Oh yeah, yeah, see that's a totally different setting...I had never seen my father walking around without canes or crutches, to me, that was normal, cane and crutches. Then my best friend's father coached the baseball team, little guys, and he ran around the bases and I couldn't believe it.... Running was totally not something I had seen.... My dad stayed home and my mom worked. I was thinking about this earlier, about you know this stick-to-itness, I think if my mom had left my dad because he was ill, [it] would have totally changed who I was, totally, because I would have said, "When the going gets rough, then"...but she stayed.
>
> (Group Conversation 4/97)

Jarod continued his storytelling by saying he had not been so poor since he was twelve years old and had a paper route and always had more money than any of his friends. He began to say "In some of our classes everyone talks about their experiences and everything is almost like Little House on the Prairie....".

At that point in our conversation, Jarod was interrupted as I introduced the idea of cover stories. I wanted to share with Jarod that not everything people tell about themselves is what they are actually living. The conversation continued and Jarod did not have the opportunity to share again because Kacee and Alyssha responded to my talk about cover stories by saying:

> K- That makes me laugh because I always felt uncomfortable because you don't want to talk about it, what you think is the problem. Or...what I thought was the problem.... Like, say my dad, we had a fight. Well you can't say anything because you know it wasn't really about anything important. It wasn't...he's not dying or anything, it doesn't really matter. Whereas everyone around you, like their parents are splitting up and they're never going to see their dad again.

> A- My friends always said, "Don't, talk about it, cover [it]. People don't want to hear that. Don't talk about it beyond these walls."

I responded to Kacee and Alyssha's thoughts by voicing my hope that the more often we met, the faster and easier it would be for us to get away from telling cover stories. It was then my turn to share and I told my story of growing up as a teacher's child.

I told a story of how my mother took my brother and me on many traveling adventures. I told two contrasting stories. One, similar to the one told in Chapter One, was an arrangement made with a neighbor to provide an experience in which we were to see the value of education by traveling and working with a group of migrant workers in the northern United States. I told of the following year when we traveled to Europe for fifty days in order to enjoy visiting places where history came alive for us. This was possible because my mother had the education that enabled us to afford a trip such as that one. I finished by telling a short version of my first encounter with district politics. I said:

> From the beginning, I was doing what my principal asked me to do with my bilingual students and what the district expected me to do.... The district thought it would encourage my students to strive for a lifestyle like mine since I was brown like them.... The children could identify with me...I bought into that big and it would be years later when I met Sandra...she was the first student who got me thinking I'm here for the children first, then district. That's when I started practicing resistance. I started learning how to work around district rules and policies, all in my students' best interests.

I concluded by saying that the best way I believed I could help students in school was by influencing the people who would be teaching them. That was why I was a part of this program and that was where I came up with the study.

Wonders About the Study Emerge

Towards the end of the first conversational session, the four participants asked questions as they prepared to leave. In preparation of the ethics document (Appendix A) for this study, I had been thoughtful about how I would address certain issues of anonymity and trust. Unfortunately, I addressed their questions only briefly as we were exceeding the time we had agreed to meet for and one of the participants had an appointment immediately following the first session.

The first questions they asked were about confidentiality. "Would it be safe to say certain things in the conversations?" "Would they be able to trust each other about sharing what had been said with other friends?" "Did I want them to talk about specific things or would they choose their own topics?" I responded to these questions by assuring them that our conversations should be regarded as confidential and that, besides the group, only my thesis advisor would get a copy of our conversation transcripts. I explained that I would transcribe our conversations as this was necessary in order to have an accurate account of our conversations. After receiving their hard copy of each session I would ask them to read over the transcripts. If they had any concerns about their responses, I asked them to please voice them.

I also gave them a brief verbal outline of how we would approach the study. I began by reminding them that future conversations were opportunities where they could talk about learning to teach and understanding difference. I said, "We can all talk about issues that are important to you and we can share what we think and help each other out, but there will not be any right answers for 'What am I supposed to do?' questions." I then voiced my desire that we would work together as a group to make our conversation places safe places to share. I talked about this by saying that I imagined this would develop as we came to know one another better. On this note, there was talk about getting together to have drinks so we could get more comfortable with each other. Unfortunately, scheduling once again proved problematic as Kacee and Marjo were returning home for the summer within the week. This did not give us enough time to plan another session and so it was put on hold until the following fall.

As the summer approached, I continued to check in with the practicum coordinator at the university concerning placement of the cohort. I wanted to be sure they would have the opportunity of working in a school with a population of various backgrounds. I hoped that working in a school with children from different backgrounds might provide more opportunities for the Conversation Group to think about the issue of difference in the classroom. By the end of the summer my participants were placed at such a school as a cohort. I was asked by the practicum coordinator at the university to make contact with the student teacher coordinator at the elementary school where the cohort were placed. I briefly spoke to her about the study, what I hoped the participants might come to understand and my role as researcher. I indicated that I did not want the study to be an intrusion. The study was not meant to take away from what the participants as student teachers were expected to do and the study was not designed to focus on the school, students or teachers, but instead was designed to examine the participants' interactions with differences they might encounter during their practica. I explained that at that point in the inquiry, I believed that I would not be an ever present researcher at the school taking notes of my participants' actions but that my participants and I would be talking about learning to teach and about learning to understand difference in conversations away from the school and after school hours. I also indicated I would drop off a copy of the proposal and a copy of the ethics document when school began the following September. The coordinator seemed quite agreeable about the four participants being placed on her campus and offered to help in any way we might need. During the summer I drove through the neighborhood where the school was located and was grateful that the school, although classified as "inner-city," did not have the stereotypical inner-city look such as high fences and graffiti laden walls about it. I was concerned that the first impression be a pleasant one for my participants so as not to shape their expectations in a negative way of their upcoming fall practicum.

Becoming Reacquainted In The Fall: Our Research Conversations Continue

The fall came and I started making arrangements for our first session of the semester. Again, several tries at different dates were made before we could agree on a date. Alyssha and Jarod were working part-time and we had to work around their schedules. Our second group conversation occurred on September 8, 1997 in an informal way without the tape recorder. I did not tape this conversation as I believed it would give us a chance to speak freely without worrying about what we were saying, especially since we were planning to have drinks at a local university spot. I did, however, write notes in my field journal afterwards. In this conversation, we talked about our summer experiences. Alyssha talked about planning her wedding for the following July and about working at a local grocery store. Kacee talked about being home for the summer and wondering if the money she made over the summer would last until Christmas. Marjo talked about working with adults with autism and how some of their behaviors were unsettling at first and how she had endured scratches and having to watch some of her clients bang their arms, legs and heads. Jarod, who was also working with adults with disabilities, told her not to worry, because his clients knew their own limits. Toward the end of this conversation we began working on meeting times and places as we began the next phase of the study.

Kacee's Apartment.

After some discussion about where we might meet on a regular basis, Kacee volunteered her apartment as it was situated on the university campus. Since they would be on campus for their student teaching seminars once a week we decided to try to schedule our conversational sessions for these evenings. We did not want to meet in my office because it was not as conducive to creating a warm and friendly atmosphere as someone's apartment nor would their anonymity be as possible if we were to continue meeting in locations in the education building. I volunteered to provide food for all our sessions since they followed four hours of student teacher seminar. I provided food native to the area in which I grew up such as Indian Cornbread, Fiesta Chicken and Frijoles Rancheros. Pizza became the food of choice when we celebrated birthdays.

Kacee's apartment was typical of university student housing. It was located on the second level of a huge student housing complex. We all preferred to walk outside of the building and up back flights of stairs because walking inside the building was crowded and hot which became twice as miserable once the cold weather set in and we were loaded down with heavy outerwear. As we entered the apartment and removed our shoes, we faced the kitchen area and the bathroom. After the long walk, I was always glad that the kitchen was the first room to be entered so I could put down the food I was carrying. Two steps out of the kitchen, we were in the main living area. The closet was located on one wall, Kacee's desk and telephone on another, her bed and a small kitchen table were placed against the wall framed with windows. The futon she used as a sofa was on the fourth wall. Her apartment was always warm and cozy -- two of us would sit on the sofa, two on the floor in front of the sofa and usually one of us on the bed beside the sofa. Usually whoever sat on the bed would eventually have to move to sit on the floor because my tape recorder proved itself less than adequate when it came to picking up voices more than two feet away. It was quite awkward in the beginning as we learned how and where to sit, how to pass or position the recorder so everyone's voice would be picked up and how to remember to turn it off when we would take our dinner break.

I continued to bring Kindersurprises to our conversations for dessert, though they were usually eaten before dinner! Kacee always offered drinks. We also celebrated everyone's birthday at Kacee's apartment and, on those days, I brought pizza. On one such occasion, we nearly started a fire. It happened when we slipped the pizzas, still in their boxes, into a warm oven. Halfway through our conversation, we started smelling something burning. The coupons plastered on top of the pizza boxes were on fire! We all laughed as we pitched the boxes outside the door and proceeded to eat our very warm pizza. Although during conversations like these the participants often expressed their feelings that they were not focused enough on the study, I continued to assure them that all was going well. I wanted as Trinh (1989) describes, for our conversations not to "break in on daily...life but [to] slip naturally into it" (p.1) -- to be experienced by each of us as a meaningful and integral aspect of our lives. Trinh helps me to describe the image I imagined for our ongoing conversational space. She writes:

> Never does one open the discussion by coming right to the heart of the matter. For the heart of the matter is always somewhere else than where it is supposed to be. To allow it to emerge, people approach it indirectly by postponing until it matures, by letting it come when it is ready to come. There is no catching, no pushing, no directing, no breaking through, no need for a linear progression which gives the comforting illusion that one knows where one goes. (p. 1)

We met at Kacee's apartment for conversation all but three times. One of our December conversations was held at Alyssha's home. Our January, 1998 conversation was at Marjo's apartment. The final group conversation on March, 1998 was held in my home.

Field Texts Emerging From Our Inquiry

The primary field texts composed during this study were narrative texts in the form of tape-recorded transcripts of our group conversations. Included within these transcripts are stories, oral histories, journal fragments, and individual responses. Secondary field texts which emerged from our shared inquiry include: letters, e-mail communication, and my field notes of some of our telephone conversations.

Conversations, Storytelling and Oral Histories.

Jarod and I began to informally engage in conversation with one another in the fall of 1996, the same semester he was enrolled in the teacher education course I taught. A similar conversation approach seemed like a possible way to compose field texts for our inquiry which spanned the course of a year, April 1997 to April 1998. I hoped that within our research conversations, we might experience the educative possibility Clandinin and Connelly (1995) describe as emerging from inquiry spaces where conversation is an integral process of the research. They write:

> Storytellers are influenced by the telling of their own stories. Active construction and telling of a story is educative: The storyteller learns through the act of storytelling.... Our interest here is not in the writing of stories for self but in their telling in relationship. And that, we believe, is doubly educative. It is an education that goes beyond writing for the self because it has a responsive audience, which makes possible both an imagined response and an actual response. The possibilities, the imagining of the response and the response, are important for the storyteller. The possibilities are important in an educative way because the meaning of the story is reshaped and so, too, is the meaning of the world to which the story refers. (p. 156)

From the first group meeting in April 1997, and as the practicum period began in September 1997, I continually encouraged the participants to engage in conversation telling stories important to them and responding to one another's stories. While I wanted as Hollingsworth (1992) describes, to become a co-learner within the conversation group and "to accomplish this shift [in my positioning from instructor to co-learner], I had to be still and listen" (p.375), they seemed to view me still in the role of instructor. For example, during our third research conversation during their practicum, they asked me to tell them what I considered was important in order for them to fulfill the requirements of engaging with me as co-researchers. Drawing upon Clandinin and Connelly (1986), I explained, "...the unfolding of a telling narrative leads where it will and researchers must follow" (p. 381). However, in my desire to be still and to listen to their stories, I often found myself becoming a participant observer during our research conversations. A boundary we continuously negotiated was my positioning within the group. Even as late as February, 1998, approximately two months prior to the end of our group conversations, they still persisted in asking me if I (as the researcher) was sure "I was getting what I needed." I thanked them for their concern and reminded them they would have the opportunity to read the preliminary drafts and voice any concerns they had before the thesis was finalized.

All four of the participants were enrolled in the same teacher education course I taught. Student evaluations written at the end of the course stated that students appeared to find me easy to approach in and out of the classroom. All four of the participants and I had shared informal conversations throughout the semester before, during and after class. Our previously shared experience did promote a sense of trust between these students and myself. This trust was necessary in order for them to be more open about sharing stories throughout the inquiry. As the four participants and myself listened and responded to each other's stories, we came to understand how each of us constructed new knowledge pertaining to teaching difference using our personal histories as a frame of reference. Recognizing that stories are told from the perspective of the storyteller and thus provide information about his/her stance in the world (Bruner, 1987) was an important understanding shaping our inquiry space-- it was an understanding that created the necessary openings where we could each speak in our own voices, telling our own stories. It was through coming to such understandings of ourselves and others that our inquiry space became a place where the events narrated included telling stories of our histories. Like Coles (1989), I learned that in conversational research spaces "the people that come...bring us their stories. They hope they tell them well enough so that we understand the truth of their lives.... We have to remember that what we hear is *their story*" (p. 7). As I shared earlier with reference to cover stories, I knew that the stories shared would " depend on the comfort, confidentiality, and shared trust, so that participants are able to share their stories safely" (Montero - Sieburth, 1997, p. 129).

As our research conversations continued, I began to realize how different our inquiry space was from some of the other spaces shaping the participants' voices. For instance, at the beginning of the practicum phase of the study in September 1997, it was voiced by all of the participants that they felt much more comfortable sharing situations occurring in their practice in the group conversation setting than in the student teaching seminar setting. The student teaching seminar seemed to be experienced at times as irrelevant to their situation. The participants also related that stories that were being shared by the majority of the student teachers were what they labeled as "good" stories. These "good" stories appeared to limit their interaction with the rest of the student teachers.

Negotiating Additional Field Texts

Although conversations were the main form of field texts within this inquiry, we also communicated, and continue to communicate, with each other through letter writing, e-mail and telephone conversations. In addition, other sources of field texts which I, at times, draw briefly upon in this text, are journal fragments from my own journal, recorded individual responses and field notes.

E-mail Communication with Alyssha and Kacee.

Once Alyssha moved away in December 1997, we began to communicate via e-mail. As a researcher needing to schedule meeting times and verify data, I used it to schedule group and individual sessions and for clarification of her statements. Beyond responding, Alyssha also initiated e-mail communication to ask me for a copy of the individual response questions I had asked them to complete for January, February and March 1998, as she had misplaced her copies during her move. In her e-mail communication, she shared the news she was substitute teaching on a regular basis and later shared the exciting news that she was hired to finish out the year as a grades 1-8 fine arts teacher.

Kacee moved away in April 1998. I wanted to keep our connection made during the study phase alive, so I began to send her e-mail to keep in touch. We also utilized e-mail for the purpose of asking her for clarification to individual responses and I wrote her e-mail messages to encourage her to seek a position in which she felt comfortable, even if it was not a position as an elementary teacher. Kacee's eventual request of me to write a letter of recommendation for her, also came through e-mail.

Telephone Calls and Letters from Marjo.

During June, 1998, Marjo phoned and shared the news that a school district in the United States wanted to schedule a phone interview with her. She related the limited information that school district shared with her and asked for response. She seemed to want me to respond in the role of "expert" again. By this, I mean that the description of the teaching position seemed similar to my teaching practice. As her friend, I cautioned Marjo in accepting an offer which involved several issues she seemed to be uncomfortable with. Two weeks later Marjo phoned and said she declined the offer.

In August, 1998, Marjo phoned to make an appointment with me to share the news that she had been placed on the substitute list for a local district. We made plans to have a conversation about the life of a substitute teacher and met the next week.

Journal Fragments.

Initially I had wanted to ask the participants to write a reflective thought before each conversation session. Unfortunately, I did not always follow through with this idea for several reasons. Many times at the beginning of sessions, the Conversation Group appeared anxious to begin the conversation and I feared we would lose momentum if we took time to write reflective thoughts. At the end of sessions, although all seemed to be productive and fulfilling, we were almost always exhausted and ready to call it a day. They did, however, write reflective fragments the first four sessions. I asked them for their first thoughts concerning the practicum experience on September 18, 1997. On September 24, 1997, I asked them to describe the kind of teacher they felt they were becoming. On October 1, and 8, I asked to write how they were coming to understand their experiences in the practicum. I draw upon particular fragments from these journal entries in Chapters Four and Five as I constructed narrative accounts of their evolving understandings of working with children different from themselves.

Transcripts of Individual Taped Responses.

It was my intention at the onset of the study to ask the participants for three pieces of writing. One was to be written before practicum, one during practicum and one after practicum. However, the tremendous amount of energy expended on their constant attention toward negotiating their complex, fragmented lives, limited the participation to three of the four participants. Recognizing this complexity in their lives, I asked the participants if they would respond to a monthly question on tape. I hoped that they would feel freer to express their innermost feelings and that this request would not seem as burdensome as the writing one. The participants began taping their responses to questions I asked from October, 1997 until March, 1998.

Some of the questions I posed were:

Do you believe you have benefited from participating in the study and if so, how? How might the practicum experience been different if not for the Conversation Group?

How have the last 15 years of teacher modeling shaped/influenced your teaching practice? Tell me a story about a special child, children, or connection you have made.

What else do you feel that you have to learn to be the teacher you want to be? How would you tell someone about yourself as a teacher? What kind of a teacher do you see yourself becoming? How did the practicum experience prepare you for the realities of teaching? Have your shared your practicum/ study experience with anyone? These individually taped and transcribed responses are part of the field texts in this study.

Field Notes On My Visits To The School.

Field notes from my visits to the participating school were kept in my journal. These field notes included information which ranged from the mundane such as directions on how to drive to and from the participating school, to my thoughts on how I believed the participants were making sense of their teaching practice. They also included notes on lessons I observed, giving me an overall impression of the school, its faculty and student population and the differences the four participants might encounter. These field notes helped me remember dates of individual conversations and helped me remember questions I wanted to ask the participants at a later date.

They were used indirectly to remind me of these conversations and to remind me that I was at the school at the request of my participants.

Reflections On Informal Meetings.

Another data source this study draws upon are reflections from my informal meetings with my advisor, participants, and other graduate students were often jotted down in point form or as poetic thoughts. They are personal reflections on how I continued to imagine myself as a better researcher in order for Alyssha, Kacee, Marjo and Jarod to gain the most from their experience in this narrative inquiry.

Background Information: The Practicum Structure

During the practicum (field experience) the student teachers are assigned to a school for 12 weeks and are involved in two classroom settings, one at the Division I level and one at Division II level. During this time, student teachers are expected to prepare lesson plans, teach to small and large groups and maintain a classroom atmosphere conducive to learning. They are expected to plan, implement and evaluate at least two units of instruction. A time period of four weeks is allowed for the first placement, while the second placement is for a period of eight weeks. Ideally, the preservice teachers' focus area determines their placement for the eight week period. Their placements were as follows:

	4 week placement	8 week placement
Alyssha	5/6 split	2/3 split
Jarod	grade 2	TMH (trainable mentally handicapped)
Kacee	2/3 split	5/6 split
Marjo	5/6 split	2/3 split

Another of the program components during the practicum is the student teaching seminar. The seminar is held one half day per week. In order to attend the seminar, the student teachers were released from normal school duties to spend the afternoon in a reflective atmosphere which was led by a seminar leader who also had the responsibility to assist the university facilitator in coordinating activities.

The participants in the field experience included the seminar leader, participating school coordinator, the cooperating teacher, the student teacher and the university facilitator.

Searching For A Facilitator

I asked the program coordinator of the elementary term field experience to place the four participants as one cohort on a campus with a diverse population. Once this was in place, I asked if it would be possible to request a specific person to be the facilitator at the cohort's elementary school. After clearing this request through the proper channels it was approved. While I did not feel it would be conducive for the study for me to be in the role of facilitator, I did want the Conversation Group to have access to a facilitator who had a good understanding of what I wanted to accomplish during the study. I wanted the facilitator to be someone who was knowledgeable in narrative inquiry, had experience in the classroom and shared notions of caring such as those Noddings (1984) writes about in the classroom. The facilitator needed to be someone who was willing to give thoughtful response especially when it concerned issues involving local district policies. This person, who not only worked with my advisor, was also well known for her caring teaching practice and for being a very helpful facilitator. I was much more confident about how my participants would experience the practicum once she agreed to work with us. Her responsibilities included communication between the school coordinator, the school's cooperating teachers, seminar leader, field experience coordinator and the student teachers. The four participants kept the university facilitator apprised of problem situations. Her supportive feedback and guidance was invaluable to the participants and myself. As their facilitator she was also responsible in participating in the collaborative evaluation at the end of each placement.

Seeing Them In School

Originally, I had not planned on observing my participants in their school setting. I did not want to be obtrusive in any way, either to the participants or their cooperating teachers. I did not know how my presence might influence their final evaluation. I also did not want the participants to think I was in any way evaluating or comparing them to one another. As time went on, however, I became aware of a tension that was growing in the group. It seemed that some group members wanted me to see what their practice looked like in the moment. They were not content just telling me stories of what they were doing. They wanted me to observe them in person. They wanted me to see what they saw as their teaching experience unfolded. It was at this time, near the end of their first placement, I decided to visit them at school on a weekly basis. Although these visits did not influence the study, they did seem to make the participant fell more comfortable with my concern for their learning to teach. I did not use specific field notes during those visits because I did not include their cooperating teachers specifically in the study, so I did not feel comfortable writing about specific events I witnessed. I did feel comfortable about using their words as they storied their experiences. When I went into their classrooms, it was strictly as an observer. I tried very hard to be as unobtrusive as possible. I wanted Jarod, Kacee, Marjo and Alyssha to keep their concentration on teaching and not be distracted by my presence.

Moving From Field Texts to Research Texts

Approximately one year after we began the study, we met at my apartment for our final group conversation on March 7,1998. I was looking forward to having the participants over to my apartment, but at the same time, realized it would most likely be the last time we met as a group. After a year of working with the Conversation Group as individuals and as a group, I knew it would be hard for me to say good-bye. Some of our relationships had grown, others continually shifted as unresolved tensions began to surface. Jarod and Alyssha were the first to arrive, followed by Kacee and Marjo.

It was a very cold and snowy day as we turned the tape recorder on for the last time. Since this was our last group meeting, my researcher instincts urged me to have a structured format in order to tie up loose ends while I had a captive audience. At the same time, although our official researcher/participant relationship was coming to an end, I wanted this last session to be the most open, a last chance for the group to tell stories important to them. I also wanted to hear in our last conversation that they had a greater understanding of teaching difference and had more confidence in their future as teachers.

Alyssha and I met to have an individual conversation the day before the last group conversation. (March 6,1998) During this conversation, she said she had been hired to finish out the rest of the school year as a fine arts teacher in grades 1-8. My intention had been to announce Alyssha's news, spend a few minutes in expressing our happiness for her and move on to the schedule I believed we needed to maintain in order to wrap up the study. I wanted some last thoughts about the study and I wanted to tell them that I had ordered a book for each of them as my way of saying thank you for participating in the year long study. I wanted to express my apology that the composition of the research text was progressing at a much slower rate than I had imagined and their input would have to be via mail. I wanted them to say that they would always keep the study in mind and that they would miss each other and would not drift apart after the study. This was to be followed by the recurring question of what kind of teacher did they see themselves as now, at the end of the study and three months after their practicum placements. I wanted to have time to wish them all good luck and say goodbye.

I was probably as anxious about the last group conversation as I had been about the first group conversation. Our time was so limited, and in my mind, there were so many details left to be covered. When Alyssha began the conversation by sharing her news with the group, it appeared the group, not I, would shape how this last conversation would progress by their response. The group was excited for her and spent the majority of our two hour session time reliving, reentering the institutional story of first, how to get hired and second, what it takes to be a good teacher. Alyssha who was now regarded as the expert for all the answers they needed to know about classroom management, working with principals, lesson plans, school politics, interviewing, and pros and cons of working in isolated areas remained the focus of the last conversation. When Alyssha realized that the conversation focused around her new role in the group, as a newly hired teacher, and now expert with answers, she apologized for monopolizing the conversation. I responded by saying that everyone, including myself, seemed to think that the topics being discussed were relevant and worthy of the time spent.

When we had exhausted all of our questions about Alyssha's stories as a beginning teacher, I attempted to refocus on tying up loose ends. It seemed whatever topic we were on, the questions or thoughts were often redirected to Alyssha. As our agreed time to meet slowly ticked away, the tape recorder was turned off and one last set of pictures was taken to document the final group conversation. Everyone said good-bye and walked out my apartment door and back into their own realities.

As I watched them drive away, I hoped they would want to keep the relationships it seemed we had developed over the year alive by keeping in contact with each other and calling on me whenever they needed response. I hoped the relationships we had formed would continue to grow as everyone, including myself looked for positions in the teaching field.

My role as researcher had shifted from someone representing the institutional story and being the leader in discussions to participant observer, to listener as I marveled at how they managed to live such fragmented lives, and in the end, back to the institutional story. The issue of difference, never so much as at the end of the study, never seemed to be an explicit part of their daily thinking. Instead, learning to teach and going back to some of their recurring questions of classroom management and lesson plans, things they needed to know in order to be good teachers were the stories most often shared.

CHAPTER IV

Negotiating Difference

Multiple Storylines

In this chapter, I explore how each participant negotiated the multiple storylines they lived in their practice of learning to teach. I frame their individual sense making of their stories in the larger context of negotiating difference.

When I first began to construct the doctoral study I hoped the conversations I had with my participants individually, and as a group, would center around the issue of difference. I wanted to know, as my proposal title implied, (Transforming Preservice Teachers' Practices with Children of Diverse Backgrounds: A Conversational Study), if, and how, they were applying in their practice teaching, what they learned through course work and from teaching stories I shared with them in individual settings.

Like Hollingsworth (1992), I soon discovered that the participants "...in fact, had other goals in mind for our meetings" (p. 380). Similar to the way she tried to encourage her participants to stay on the issues of reading she wanted to focus on, I tried to encourage my participants to keep the issue of understanding difference in our conversations. Soon Hollingsworth conceded, as did I, and agreed "If nothing comes up around it, [reading] then we'll go with what does come up" (p. 380). We both experienced similar results to that concession. The Conversation Group quickly became aware that our conversations were open to any topic they wished to discuss. Some of their interests included classroom routines, classroom management and assuming more responsibility for class instruction. Although all these interests could be linked to "difference", the participants did not seem to see it that way. During our year together the Conversation Group never initiated a focused discussion around the issue of difference. This resistance, as I interpreted it, was frustrating and, as a first time researcher, my initial reaction was that perhaps the participants I was working with did not understand what the study was about. After exploring this dilemma with my advisor, Dr. Jean Clandinin, she helped me better understand that, while *my* interest focused on understanding difference in the classroom, my participants seemed determined to shape the study by addressing issues which were important to *them*. These issues seemed focused on the social nature of learning to teach that is, on negotiating relationships with their cooperating teacher, students and parents. As the conversations continued, their stories centered around children whose behavior in the classroom seemed to shape each participant's practice. These stories came to be known as "the story-of-the week."

Each participant negotiated multiple storylines during their experience of learning to teach and understanding difference. Although my definition of "difference" proved to be different from that of the participants', I eventually came to understand that they were indeed negotiating difference as they understood it. These are my tellings of their stories.

Jarod.

I first met Jarod as an undergraduate student in a science methods course I was teaching. This was the last course I taught during my doctoral studies and in which all four of the participants were members. On the first day of class, I watched each of my new students walk into the room. I remember watching *him* walk through the door. He wore a black leather jacket with fringe, bracelets on his wrists and a large silver earring in his ear. Fluid strides enabled by his six foot three frame made his long blonde hair appear as if he was moving in slow motion. His nonchalant entrance and overall expression triggered public school teaching memories for me. Those memories were of children who were storied as "different," therefore inferior somehow. When I developed relationships with these children who were different, I came to understand that although their backgrounds were different from mine, they were in no way inferior. I knew the moment Jarod walked into class, that I wanted to hear his story. I wanted to know more about Jarod.

It was my custom to invite undergraduate students to my office for conversation. There, we shared conversations about their own schooling experiences and how making connections with children, especially children different from ourselves, was very important. Jarod's first conversation with me, about his childhood school memories, was so captivating that I asked him to return as often as he wished. Soon, we were sharing conversations on a weekly basis. These conversations focused on how his early school experience appeared to have been shaped by a system which seemed not to have followed up on a prescribed course of action. Jarod's testing and ultimate placement in special education classes in third grade ushered him into a world where school was lived and experienced by him as a place of failure, isolation, and fear.

> Schools have a certain smell about them. I still get freaked out when I go back to my original elementary school. Memories, unhappy memories, flood back to me because of the smell of the air. I have unhappy memories because most of my memories are of being afraid.... The strong emotion I felt as a small child about school was fear. Fear because teachers and even the principal used scare tactics to control my behavior.... Anyway, when you're in a situation long enough you began to take on the characteristics which they label you with. Once I was

> labeled special ed. I think I probably became a slower learner because of being there. It remedialized my thinking processes by remedializing the academic challenge. By the time I reached Junior High, I began to get the message of being shipped out, dumped off, and forgotten about. (Conversation 11/96)

At the age of eight, Jarod began negotiating his "difference" within the school contexts and, as a result, experienced school as a labeled child which marginalized the rest of his school experience. Jarod not only seemed to see his learning as remedialized due to his placement, but also experienced this time as a time of rejection and chose to retreat into a world of his own creation. I wanted to know how Jarod remembered his teachers. I asked Jarod to write a short piece about teachers who made a difference in his early schooling. The following was a conversation where Jarod began by reading a description of his schooling experiences to the Conversation Group.

> Jarod -To be honest I have no special teacher memories from that period in my life. The only time things felt normal was my first three years when I was in my community school. So essentially I was in a regular school for three years and then I was pulled out, so then, I only had animosity after that. Animosity to teachers and labels.... In school I was the real quiet one, and always worried about not having any friends and having friends reject me. So rather than talk to people I went into my own little world, that way you don't have to deal with rejection. You just be the quiet guy in the corner and don't bring attention to yourself. So once I was moved I turned into a real quiet loner-type person so now I've got written here, but in those beginning years there was no special teacher, they didn't come until junior high or high school. So, I remember the first high mark I ever

> got in school was in psychology in high school, I got an eighty percent.... That was the first thing I considered taping to the refrigerator wall, so that was the one teacher that I felt made a difference because I spent fifteen years in school and can count three teachers that made any sort of difference to me.
>
> Marjo - What was that teacher's name?
>
> Jarod - Mr. H.
>
> E- Do you remember all of their names?
>
> Jarod - I remember all of their names, absolutely.
>
> E - I think that's where I was going with this. Do you see yourself as a child in your writing, in the rooms where you are teaching? Don't you have children in your classes that are special needs?
>
> Jarod - Yep, kinda. Yeah, Yeah, so you sorta spend a little more time with them. So, again, "I have no good memories of the elementary school. I hated being there. I just flipping hated it"
>
> (Group Conversation 9/24/97)

That was, in Jarod's words, the way he remembered his school experience from the time he was in third grade and was placed in special education. He remembered it as an experience filled with animosity and loneliness because he had been labeled, and was, therefore, different from the other children. In the description above when I asked him whether or not he saw parallels between his experience and the experience of the children in the classroom, he seemed to respond only long enough to acknowledge my question but he did not address it and returned immediately to his writing he was in the process of sharing. His written response seemed to reflect a sense of betrayal, a sense that his teachers, the very individuals who could have helped him the most, seemed not to understand that he did not belong there. 'There' referred to special education classes.

> As I have mentioned before in past discussions, my first thought when I got there was, "I do not belong here!" Special Ed. from my perspective, was everything that I thought it would be. My biggest shock was to actually SEE a kid repeatedly bang his head against the wall. Get me out of here. These kids scare me! I don't belong here!
>
> (Journal Entry 10/96)

For Jarod, the way he tells the story was that there were children who belonged in special education, but he was not one of them. Jarod apologized when he handed me his written piece about teachers who made a difference. He apologized because he did not have anything pleasant to say about his teachers.

> I have no good memories of elementary school teachers...I didn't admire any of them...I rejected them by tuning them out and doing only the minimum work. We were the stupid ones, right? So why work?...I never had a teacher who stirred something inside of me until grade 8.
>
> (Individual Writing 8/97)

Jarod longed to prove he was more than the labels that his school records indicated. As a young adult he tried to prove who he really was by joining the armed forces, only to be dealt a devastating blow just before he realized success. This, a result of the complications of dyslexia and the seemingly inflexible position of those in authority. Problems with dyslexia led him, as Jarod tells the story, to have trouble with written material and these problems eventually led to his discharge. He did not see this experience as a failure. Up to the point of his discharge, he believed he had been successful.

This time, the experience did not leave him believing he was a failure. It had been a series of unfortunate circumstances which forced him out. He left this experience "full of questions." "Why am I always the odd ball out?" "Why do I not fit in the mainstream flow?" "Why am I always not getting it?" (Clarification Conversation 10/98 regarding Conversation 12/17/96) These questions appeared to strengthen his resolve. He seemed further motivated as he encountered other young adults he knew as former classmates. He wondered why it seemed as if his former classmates had not tried to overcome the label of failure as he was attempting to do.

> What makes one man rise and another not? We all started from the same place and I met up with some of those kids now eleven years after graduation and nine out of ten are losers, bums, welfare slackers.... What makes them accept $5.50 an hour for the rest of their lives? Because I said to hell with that noise...skid row isn't my style.
>
> (Journal Entry 11/96)

Being a "bum" or minimum wage worker was not a story Jarod wanted to live. The following is a piece of Jarod's journal writing he shared with me about what it was that kept him from accepting the life which had been scripted for him since grade 3.

> By the time I got out of high school, I believed, with 95% of my being, that I was academically stupid. I would amount to nothing but maybe a gas jockey. That remaining 5% however, is where my spirit lived....That 5% contained the voice that said "No you're not! And one day you will prove it."
>
> (Journal Entry 12/17/96)

With some encouragement from friends, Jarod upgraded his academic standing from a junior high level to the appropriate level necessary to enter university. It was during this process of upgrading that Jarod realized success by "conquering" Math 30. Mastering this subject and others was essential for Jarod to gain entrance to any local college, university or technical school. In a one on one conversation, Jarod shared his memories of this time with me. He said:

> I thought I was unteachable, except for that 5%...I remember calling my mom and saying, "I feel like my brain is a brick-not a sponge." The thought of conquering Math 30 at that point was as far away as touching the moon. But as I began to achieve small milestones like conquering Math 30, Biology 30 and English 30, which were key to getting into university, I was able to understand what it was like going from knowing *nothing,* to knowing *something.* Now, I could teach Math 30 to somebody coming only with a junior high education by breaking it down so anyone could understand. As a teacher, I can simplify things so I can teach any age, anything.
>
> (Clarification Conversation 10/98 regarding Conversation 12/17/96)

Jarod's focus became teacher education when he was accepted into the university. He was determined to restory himself as successful, and school as a safe place.

> At one point I wanted to stay in the work force because it was something I knew and understood. It was a place I felt safe. I did not want to face the world of university, which was unknown to me - alien. Now I find I am afraid to enter the work world because school has become my safe place. The work world has now become alien.
>
> (Journal Entry 11/96)

School, for Jarod had not been experienced as a safe place. Still being educated in a special education track, dropping out of high school two months before graduation on a dare to join the armed forces seemed inconsequential. Years later, Jarod returned to school determined to restory himself as successful and school as a safe place. Jarod's journey from high school drop out to preservice teacher took approximately seven years. During that seven year time span, he took many college and university courses. Some courses seemed to be viewed as "a waste of time," their only importance seen within the institutional story of knowledge regurgitation.

> ...specifically courses that are completely irrelevant and a waste of time...general courses. Everybody presents their course like it's the greatest thing since sliced bread...especially in psychology...because it's their focus...it's not practical to real life...to digest and know this thing front and back in order to please them when you know as soon as that class is over you are going to throw that book out...
>
> (Conversation 2/98)

University course work in Jarod's mind seemed irrelevant and impractical. Jarod's struggle to continue to negotiate a story of success was at times accompanied by irritation. Regurgitated knowledge on exams in a way that would secure a good mark irritated him. Jarod was also irritated by students who appeared to react to him in an attitude that conveyed condescension. It was a story Jarod shared with me on many occasions, one such time was in a one on one conversation two months after practicum.

> I guess I'm trying so hard not to be Joe Average...I want whoever I come across to appreciate what I've done...depending on who I'm talking to...depending if I'm being encouraging...so I explain what I've been through in order to encourage them or...some people are, my life was a

> white picket fence, Little House on the Prairie and I'm better than you...***me,*** being this brain dead, long haired guy, with a black leather jacket. Well, excuse me, but...I see it as me being a more rooted human being and it brings to light their shallowness and I get to call them on it because it's pretty hard to pull off substance when you've had it pretty easy all the way through school and you don't know what struggle is. You want to know about struggle,I'll tell you about struggle...maybe it will help them reflect on themselves.
>
> (Conversation 2/98)

Jarod's response seemed to emphasize the notion that being a student in university centered more around competition than camaraderie. It was a place where students who were members of the mainstream did not seem to appreciate the difficulties encountered by students who were not members of the mainstream. Although some courses seemed to be viewed as "a waste of time," there were instances when Jarod appreciated the instructor's response as demonstrated in the following excerpt.

> One course really stood out and was really interesting. The textbook that we had was very well written. It's the first time that I've written in the margins to that extent. Consequently I showed that book to the people at 'Students with Learning Disabilities' and she photocopied the book because she said "This is what I want to teach my learning disabled students to do, to respond to the text. That way you have an opinion and it is easier to recall when you go to talk about it on a test."
>
> (Conversation 2/98)

Jarod seemed proud when he told me about this conversation with his instructor. He was able to contribute an idea which would help other students learn to respond to the text.

Jarod seemed determined to make a difference in children's lives in the role of teacher. He would not be the controller, the squasher, of young spirits. He wanted to become the best teacher he could be and to do what was best for the children in his care. As Jarod reflected on the storyline he had in his head for his practicum experience, he reminded me how he mentally prepared himself.

> Before practicum I ran every possible scenario of what could happen through my mind, including a nightmare scenario like what happened to Marjo. In this way I feel I mentally prepared and thus NO scenario would come as a surprise. Luckily for me all went well...I started becoming the person/teacher I had envisioned. A little unsure at first but not afraid to take on whatever was given to me. Another good thing was I was able to advance at my own pace. Alyssha was in a sense thrown in, teaching 50% by the end of the first week, this would have freaked me out too... (Conversation 2/98)

Clearly, Jarod did not want to be caught off guard, surprised by the unexpected. Cautiously, he prepared himself for any glitch that might occur. I think this response came as a result of all the times he had not been successful. He anxiously awaited practicum to begin.

Jarod's first placement was in a Division I classroom. The first few days were described by Jarod as feeling like a guest, much like the participants in MacKinnon's (1989) work who experienced entering classrooms that "were not theirs. As such, they were guests..." p. 11). Slowly, he was given responsibility for doing some morning activities with the children. However, while Jarod began with an idea that a good teacher was kind and gentle and soft spoken, much like his own personality, it appeared as though Jarod's cooperating teacher in his first four week placement began to shape a notion that having good control over the children was equal to being a good teacher.

> In our debriefings I was given permission to be as firm as necessary which for me, I needed to hear...because I knew she saw me as an equal "teacher" that needs to maintain control in order for learning to occur. (Group Conversation 9/18/97)

This "permission" seemed to give Jarod the confidence to explore the "control" notion and it shaped Jarod's ability to negotiate difference with his Division I children. The lessons he taught now became*his* lessons. The transfer of authority seemed complete to Jarod and he explained that he "suddenly had weight behind me, in the student's eyes" (Group Conversation 9/18/97). He also considered the teacher's advice useful as it seemed to be centered around behavior. Consequences and options to exercise when students were off-task were considered valuable "weapons." "Weapons I used which made my lessons successful and the filling out of the shoe *teacher* more complete" (Group Conversation 9/18/97). Even though Jarod shared stories of "scare tactics" he experienced as a child in the classroom, this new experience of being in control was enticing. Learning to be firm and in control was not seen as a reflection of what he experienced in his own schooling. Jarod appeared to buy into the notion that arming himself with the weapons needed for classroom management and being in control of his classroom was the "right way."

> She nails them for everything. Right? And I'm so kind of soft, soft, and not boom! I really need to learn that. Like that's something I consciously have to do...I believe in the way she's doing it. Like I think the way she does it is a very right way.

(Group Conversation 9/18/97)

Jarod appeared more confident in his teacher identity and more comfortable with his new found authority. He soon realized that this identity could be threatened through unexpected encounters. As these challenges materialized, Jarod's actions reflected the actions taken by participants who worked with Tardif (1985). She wrote,"When confronted with an actual disciplinary situation, the classroom management approaches used indicated an increasing degree of control and the desire to maintain authority" (p. 145). One of his stories of these unexpected encounters came forward in the following excerpt from a group conversation.

> Like, I have two kids in my class which are trying on your nerves. Amy, the girl is just frustrated. She doesn't know how to print anything pretty much. When it comes to a written assignment , she doesn't have the vocabulary in her head to put it on paper. Derrick, he's just a behavior, as long as you keep him busy, he's okay. As soon as you have free time, he's in trouble. I took some trucks away from him yesterday. I gave him a choice, "If I see them, I take them." I saw them, I took them. Uhm, it was close to time to go home...and this girl who's having difficulty, like she's kinda like him, she's like a truck, she'll run you over. So they started wrestling and he hauled off and he kicked her and nailed her, and she didn't even flinch. I went "You don't do that! That's not right! Go sit down. You need a time to relax in your desk." He said, "Make me." So I picked him up and as soon as I picked him up, he went "weeeeee!" Right there, I realized I just made an error. Like me picking him up, I thought, he would be like, holy! But that's not what happened. So, plop, into your desk. And that has played on my mind ever since. Like that's my first big

> error. Not that I got physical, but because it totally backfired, because it did not faze him, what so ever. In fact, it had the complete opposite. (Group Conversation 10/3/97)

As Jarod told the story of the little girl in his class who lacked the skills to complete her work, it seemed to be something he struggled with. He seemed to recognize she had a problem, but was not able to move beyond what he saw as "her" behavior problem and respond to it. When his newfound authority was questioned, he responded by using the "choices" strategy which was something he had learned in the practicum seminar. After the wrestling incident, Jarod resorted to physical intimidation in order to bring the unacceptable behavior to an immediate halt. Clearly, he was surprised when that strategy did not work. Jarod considered his actions an "error" because the strategy backfired. The experience caused him to wonder about how he responded to the situation.

> I did learn something....I was teaching alone and he decided he didn't want to do it. No prompting that I did would get him to get his book out so he went to the back of the room and sat underneath the table and grabbed the chairs on either side and started banging them. I brought the whole class to an end, went over there. "This is completely unacceptable. Get into your desk right now and get to work." "No, I don't want to." Then I got into the choices. "You can do it now or you can do it during recess." I gave him his choice and turned and walked away and dealt with the other students that were asking for my attention. Out of the corner of my eye, out from under the table he came and into his desk. Even if he didn't work on what he had to, like it was almost recess anyway, but I got him from this point back into his desk, so to me that was a success. (Group Conversation 10/3/97)

Jarod responded to the above situation without physically overpowering the child, enacted the "choices" strategy and continued the lesson he was teaching with the children who were asking for his attention. Even though the child was not on task, he did stop his disruptive behavior, enabling Jarod to experience what he considered to be some degree of success in this new story he was trying to live.

Jarod's first placement of four weeks was ending and he was scheduled to begin his second eight week placement in a special education setting. He did not seem to be looking forward to the transition, especially since he believed his first cooperating teacher was teaching the "right" way. "I can see the growth I could achieve in her class by modeling her type of teaching and because I understand all the subjects she is doing" (Group Conversation 10/29/97). Jarod seemed concerned that he might not experience the growth necessary in his second placement to become the teacher he saw as a "professional". He said,

> I'm upset. I'm upset because I don't feel like I can build onto what I've learned already, because I've been taken completely out of one setting and put into another, so I feel like I'm back in my very first week. I feel like I've lost.... See you guys get to continue with the skills that you've learned. You do lesson plans...you're getting resources, you're delivering it. Plus you've got the skills of class management, you're continuing on....whereas me, you guys are teaching chunks, math, science, social, and everything is broken up and you are honing your skills...but with me, it's like, I feel like I'm on a body of water, and one thing flows into the next. It's not broken up into chunks...we're talking about fine motor skills, and recognizing their names. Again, I'm thinking obtaining the skills. The

> skills of a teacher. And right now, I have been brought down to a level where I'm not being challenged. My first two days, I fell asleep in that class.
>
> (Group Conversation 10/29/97)

Jarod struggled with the transition from a highly structured classroom to one in which lessons were taught as integrated, which in his eyes, gave the appearance of one non-stop flow of lessons. It seemed so different to him as he compared both placements. The subject matter was different, so much so, that Jarod could not see how presenting the material would challenge him. Jarod seemed to worry that his special education placement would limit learning the "skills" of a teacher. For him the skills were classroom management, subject matter knowledge, delivery, and securing resources. Lesson content was not seen as challenging, therefore he would not experience growth.

After a couple of weeks of adjusting to his second placement, Jarod began to appreciate the difference in the way he was allowed to teach his daily lessons. In the following excerpt, Jarod compared his two placements again. Jarod's perception of the TMH (Trainable Mentally Handicapped) setting shifted. It was no longer seen as boring, instead he enjoyed the freedom the nature of the lesson presentation seemed to give him.

> The deeper I get into this TMH class I'm finding perhaps that I would learn more being in a TMH class because of the blatant freedom. Look at how goofy I am. I sing these silly little tunes and draw silly little pictures and it's fun. It's play. I get to play for my job. Being in my first placement class was work. There I was a professional. I am there to teach. I am running this class. I'm the authority and I have spent the time and I have this lesson and I am going to present you with this lesson. In that class I

> was the teacher and out it came. And that's okay. If I had to choose, I would choose the TMH class. These children are well attentive and on task and high enough functioning that they participate. If I get one or two bad apples that could change the dynamics of the class so much that then it becomes not a pleasure. Because it doesn't flow the way it's supposed to, the way it is now. Nearly flawless. Get an autistic kid, a screamer...bolting stuff ...your job becomes work because you are going back to absolute behavior management, you are a manager gaining control....
>
> (Individual Response 11/12/97)

Jarod's teaching story in his first placement seemed to be centered around the notion that good teaching was centered around authority and the ability to control a large group of children. Lessons were taught in a presentation format and subjects were viewed as separate entities and experienced as "work." His four week placement experience seemed to encapsulate what he thought his teaching story should be. It was a role centered around authority and presentation. His second placement teacher story was experienced as one of working in small groups and having the flexibility to be "goofy." It was not a role filled with the notion of control. This teacher story was one he could live and experience as "fun." Given a choice between the two extremes, he seemed to prefer the second placement. In the following excerpt Jarod explained why.

> The memories of the last fifteen years have almost been completely erased....all these ideas put to song makes it fun to the extent that I can maintain the child that I am and that idea is incredible...it creates a strong desire to do that. That to me would be an incredibly rewarding career. Because every year I could change the song, the themes, I have free

> rein. Ms. D [first placement regular classroom cooperating teacher] has to follow the curriculum.
>
> (Individual Response 11/12/97)

The possibility of not losing the "child" within by teaching in a TMH setting was seen as "incredible." Even so, he realized the "fun" could easily be experienced as "work" if group dynamics changed as a result of a couple of "bad apples" who needed extra attention. If that should be the case, then Jarod saw behavior management and control as the logical solution.

Behavior management did not seem to be necessary in the TMH setting. The children were cooperative and rarely exhibited behavior that needed correction. Jarod did, however, experience some frustration when some children seemed to want to do things differently.

> The little guy, Kenny I'm thinking about is almost too bright for his own good. He is non-verbal. He's the fastest worker there is in that class. He's really quick and he usually gets things right, but a lot of times he whips through things and it burnt him in the end.... So he'll do work with me and it's frustrating in a little bit because you've got these papers already prepared like four or five papers and he'll get through all of them and be done and be getting into trouble, not getting in trouble, but.... He's done in less than half the time and so I find it, I would rather do it as a group and normally he's right on. He's really bright, if he could speak, he would probably be in regular class. I can't see why not. In that respect he's miles ahead. He can color in the lines, print his name....Then again, sometimes the speed comes back and bites him in the butt. Like he'll get it done, but it's not done right. It's not done the way it was instructed.... He colored the hands, the feet, the wings, everything. The instructions were

> "Do not color the wings." So he did it wrong. And he's the most capable and he's the only one that did it wrong.... Like another thing, I'll have my station set up and my crayons and everything here and he'll help himself to them because he wants to get going. Like he went to grab it and I smacked the crayons back down, I said, no you don't, like those are mine. That's my work station, my crayons and I'll dish them out to you when I'm ready. I withhold things like that just so they won't speed ahead.
> (Group Conversation 12/3/97)

This encounter with difference seemed to frustrate Jarod. He really enjoyed having this child in class because he was bright and a fast worker. Jarod even made the comment that the child could be in a regular classroom if he had speech. On the other hand, these two qualities were the very things that frustrated Jarod. I wondered if he would see how this story paralleled his own when he was first placed in special education and believed he was being "remedialized". Jarod seemed unsure of how to teach this bright little boy so he resorted to the familiar and comfortable role of controller and evaluator. He demanded that the child stay on task and follow directions. This excerpt reminded me of Jarod's story of not being valued when he was first placed in special education.

> If this school had been for the creative mind, I would have been the top student. Every project I did was Star Wars. I wrote illustrated books relating the story. I made audio cassette recordings that included sound effects from things I had in my room...I made films with my parent's 8 mm film camera.
> (Journal Entry 11/6/96)

I hoped that Jarod would make the connection between the story Kenny was living and his own. I wanted him to appreciate the child's "capability" and reward it instead of restricting the child to following group directions. Jarod persisted in his thinking that the child was the most capable child in the class. However, to be successful he should follow directions like the rest of the class. As I thought about it, the parallels were striking between Jarod's story of having a creative mind and this bright little boy who wanted to forge ahead in his own way.

At the end of the practicum Jarod described what a wonderful treat it was to have a surprise going away party thrown in his honor. The party was not only experienced as a treat, but seemed to awaken Jarod to a new understanding of the ability that all of the children with whom he had spent eight weeks possessed.

> I would imagine the most touching experience I had would have been the last day that I was there Dec. 5, which I was completely oblivious to the fact that they had planned a little party for me.... It came as a real big shock to me. I completely expected to go through the last day with business as usual right through the end, say good-bye and leave.... We all had ice cream cake.... And I was given the card and it was a very simple card that said: "You came, you saw" and then you opened it up and it said "and then you left." So, that sorta hit me square in the face the fact that it was over and I opened up my gifts and it was a picture of the class and...a very nice diary.... When the whole sorta thing wrapped up, they all came up and hugged me and gave me pats on the head and pats on the back and you know these waves and for the first time, in many many years, my eyes welled up with emotion.... It has to be a pretty powerful thing to choke up a guy.... So they left and I was standing there

> holding my prezzies, feeling very humble and small. I don't know why I felt small, I just felt like I was put in my place somehow on this earth and if there was anyone, not that I did, but it was a feeling of having walked around in these superior shoes of superiority and on a pedestal. Me, the teacher, and suddenly I became, I would have been placed on my hands and knees with these kids.... That's kinda where I felt my place was at that point. I was brought down close to earth and saw these children as very aware, conscious kids. The rest of that day was just light and airy and fluffy and no stress.... So, that was a very, very rewarding moment. It gave me a new dimension, a new element of respect for these kids.
> (Individual Response 1/6/98)

Jarod seemed to realize during the party, he had pictured himself as superior in the role of teacher in the TMH setting due to the nature of the class. Watching the children he had spent eight weeks with in a social context of which an adult was the focus, enabled him to see the children in the TMH setting as "aware", "conscious." Again, this reminded me of his experience in special education. His teachers, as Jarod remembered it, did not seem aware of his true academic ability.

Towards the end of his practicum experience, Jarod appreciated his time in the TMH setting. His specialization was in special education and he seemed to recognize this teaching experience as invaluable.

> If I had done my practicum in my first placement, the whole time and got a job as a TMH teacher I would have nothing new.... All I would have to draw on would be my experiences...until I acquired some ideas from other people and resources....This particular week, I am presenting my own finger play on the felt boards that we do in the morning....The finger

> play went so well. It's like going on a lion hunt and they are searching for their Teddy bears...you look around and you see their eyes and you play it up...and they're "Oooohhh!!"...that's my first sense of being rewarded. Reward that is so subtle. It's not a grade of 100% that I am a successful teacher, it's not their regurgitation of material, but it is a subtlety in their appreciation of an effort that I made. I had a whole lot of...theory from school but I had nothing concrete and a smiling child's face that told me what I just did was a success....
>
> (Individual Response 11/12/97)

Jarod experienced his student teaching in the TMH setting as more rewarding than in his first placement. Although he seemed to keep the notion that teaching in a regular classroom somehow made him more professional, he felt more successful in his second placement.

In response to the question of what did he think he still needed to learn to become a better teacher after practicum, Jarod's attention seemed to be focused on procedural and paperwork items.

> In terms of developing lessons and what not...I have no idea.... If I got a job in September, and was told to fill some paperwork out like an IEP [individualized education plan], I wouldn't have a clue what is really on these things, what is pertinent. The university kinda failed special ed. students in that sense...there was nothing there that gives any sort of grounding in terms of what to do. The only way you're going to find out those things is by searching it out yourself by talking to people.
>
> (Individual Response 1/19/98)

Jarod seemed disappointed that the university had not prepared him for the necessary paperwork critical to children in special education. I wondered once again if he would make a connection back to his own testing and placement in special education. If he did, no comment was ever made.

Jarod completed his course work and was eligible to seek teaching positions for January, 1998. He seemed hesitant to take the next step and missed early deadlines for filing the necessary paperwork. He did not seem to mind as he stated in a conversation later.

> I've been going to school for seven years and I'm taking a break. I need recharge time to avoid burn out.
>
> (Conversation 1/19/98)

Jarod's journey from high school drop out to beginning teacher was over. I asked Jarod now that he had successfully completed his teacher education program and had experienced an enjoyable practicum, if he felt he still needed to prove himself to others and or himself. This was his response in a one on one conversation:

> I haven't reached my goal. I've obtained the goal, now what am I going to do with it? Now, it is completely up to me to take everything I've learned, everything that I know and make it 100% mine. Prove to myself, I guess that's what that first year will be.
>
> (Conversation 2/98)

Alyssha.

Alyssha was an undergraduate student in the same science methods course I taught in which the other three participants were enrolled. She seemed to have a quiet elegance about her. She was always polite, cooperative and never seemed to draw undue attention to herself. When I invited her to participate in this inquiry, she seemed eager to participate. It appeared she may have seen the invitation as an opportunity to learn more about herself as a future teacher in the context of a safe place.

Alyssha storied herself as independent, hard working and open to new ideas, meeting obstacles along the way as something to be dealt with. This storyline may have been shaped by Alyssha's childhood experiences. By the time Alyssha was in grade two, she had lived in three countries, spoke three languages and lived in conditions few of us could imagine. Until the age of five, she lived in Poland where she happily entertained herself by playing "teacher" with her teddy bears and dolls. Suddenly, due to what she refers to as "political reasons," her family felt compelled to leave Poland. Fleeing Poland, Alyssha and her parents were housed in an Austrian immigration camp. For her, it was an experience "that shall forever haunt me." In her memory, the camp was grossly overcrowded and, as she remembered, "It was disgusting to see what some of those people were doing in full view of others...." The eleven month experience was, for her, terribly difficult. Her experience of entering another country's school system as a non-English speaking immigrant was one of the reasons I invited Alyssha to participate in the study.

Alyssha's story in Canada began in 1982. As she revisited the years spent in elementary and junior high, Alyssha described her schooling experiences as a mixed bag of memories.

> We came to Canada in 1982 and [I] started off in first grade. I was a labeled child, slow, retarded, anything goes. I distinctly remember...some teacher told me, and then to my parents in a parent teacher interview "Oh, we'll give her to maybe age 16, by then she's going to drop out....University? No, never."
>
> (Group Conversation 4/7/97)

Some of her stories of her first years in Canadian schools were remembered as unhappy ones. Learning English was difficult because no language instruction or E.S.L. (English as a Second Language) teacher was available. She remembered sitting in the back of the class as the recipient of whole group instruction in a language she did not understand. As a result, it was difficult for Alyssha to socialize with the English-speaking children and she was, instead, drawn to other Polish speaking children. Being with other Polish speaking children was a space she used to commiserate and where she found support. It was school policy that these children speak English while in school and Polish was not spoken without consequences. The enforcement of the policy forced the Polish speaking children into silence. This school was not a safe place to socialize in her home language or an encouraging place to practice her new language.

When Alyssha entered second grade, she began to form a relationship with her teacher which would shape the way she would approach future relationships with the majority of her teachers.

> And I know in regards to how I'm being shaped as a teacher one of the most important things I think I can do is work on the relationships I build with the kids.... I think a lot of the time the experiences I've had with my teachers are also on a personal close level. I've already talked to you about my experiences when I first came to Canada with the way teachers had helped me out. Even throughout high school, there have been teachers who just talk to you as though you weren't necessarily their student. They talked to you as though you were somebody important almost at a point that you were their equal. And so I think that is important when talking to students. That you're not talking down to them.

> (Individual Response 11/97)

One of the ways Alyssha seemed to believe she could make a difference in the lives of her students was to take time to know her students and the lives her students were living. We talked about how communication and sensitivity were necessary to make the school landscape a safe place. The relationships Alyssha seemed able to establish with her teachers appeared to help her cope with the instability experienced throughout her schooling. She knew that instability was something she had experienced and perhaps the children she was teaching could be experiencing.

> I've been to ten or twelve different elementary and junior high schools...I moved so many times, because my parents didn't have a car so our living location depended on where they worked. Most of their beginning jobs were short contract jobs, so we moved a lot just to be close to the job.
>
> (Group Conversation 4/7/97)

Relationships proved to be difficult to establish as Alyssha's school placements depended on the work availability for her parents. This, however, did not make her into a "loner." Instead, she said it made her more independent. The following is a snippet of dialogue between Jarod and Alyssha speaking to that experience.

> Alyssha - I never really got the time to make...friends and that sort of thing.
>
> Jarod - Did that make you into a loner? Do you think you kept to yourself?
>
> Alyssha - Not a loner, independent, I'd say. I was never the type of person in junior high or high school you know, you see that girl, that boy, alone, right away they're the outcast, the loser. You know if you didn't have your own group of friends you were just... That really never

> bothered me.
>
> (Group Conversation 4/7/97)

Alyssha's childhood experiences both on and off the school landscape were another reason I invited her to participate in this inquiry. It seemed to me that her experiences might mirror those of the students she would be teaching. I hoped her experiences would help her make connections with children from different backgrounds.

One of the storylines Alyssha negotiated was that of university student. In an e-mail communication, she wrote to me about her parents' understanding of her career choice.

> My parents' involvement in my education was always very supportive, but in truth they knew little of what actually occurred in it. My parents were very proud that I went to University because I am the first of the family....They were always interested and eager to help me out. They were always very supportive of my career choice.
>
> (E-mail 3/11/98)

Alyssha stepped into a world her parents did not know when she began her teacher education program. She saw them as proud and supportive, yet, unable to fully comprehend her experience. Her experience, as she remembers it, was entering university with one goal in mind. Finishing. The story she said she was living at that time seemed to be based more on her life off the university landscape than on. Establishing and maintaining personal relationships was important to Alyssha. Keeping her personal life on track seemed to be the focus, being a student was secondary. She carefully planned her course work so she would finish in three and a half years rather than in what she saw as the traditional four years. Alyssha methodically worked her way through course work, carefully keeping her newfound knowledge nicely organized in binders. Course work, to her, seemed a stair-step way of eventually reaching practicum. The practicum experience appeared to be what she was working toward. She pictured it as the most useful component of her university studies as well as the most rewarding. Course work seemed to be viewed as necessary but not rewarding. Evaluation and earning a high enough grade point average appeared to be the focus in most of her courses. Learning about the realities of teaching seemed to be left to the practicum experience. Alyssha soon became immersed in the university story of evaluation. As she remembers it, evaluation in courses created competition among students and did not promote camaraderie. In the following excerpt she laments the competitive nature created in the institutional setting.

> I don't think we would be anywhere near as comfortable sharing our bad experiences because being at university, that has taught us to be completely competitive...
>
> (Individual Response 11/97)

Her university experience shaped the way she related to other students. The other students represented obstacles to surpass in an effort to make it to the top of the grade point average. University was a place of competition, it was not seen or experienced as a place for collaborative learning. Alyssha seemed happy that the Conversation Group managed to establish a relationship which was caring and trusting. It was during the first Conversation Group session that Alyssha was asked what led her to teaching.

> That's all I've ever wanted to do since age 5.... I remember in Poland...setting up my teddy bears, my dolls and my teaching...
>
> (Group Conversation 4/7/97)

Alyssha shared the above words in April, 1997, the first time the Conversation Group met. Being a teacher was something she had worked toward all her life. She seemed to look forward to her practicum and to participating in the inquiry. As her practicum period began, Alyssha's negotiation with difference seemed centered around the conversations we had in and out of the Conversation Group.

> ...every time there's a situation with a particular student, the study comes up and I always think how do I react and how can I do it differently? I really hope that now that my mind is really into thinking about all these ideas we share, that now we can start applying them more often....
>
> (Individual Response 11/97)

Alyssha appeared to make a determined effort to keep the study in mind and remarked on several occasions that she seemed more sensitive to the issue of difference and, as a result, became more aware of how she interacted with her students. She remembered how important this had been in her own life.

> I think the most important influence is knowing that those teachers made a difference in my life and so it is my goal to make a difference in the lives of my students now and in their future.
>
> (Individual Response 11/97)

Although her first memories in Canadian schools seemed to be filled with frustration, it was the memories of teachers who made a difference which Alyssha seemed to focus on. Alyssha liked sharing stories about her second grade teacher. She seemed to believe that this teacher influenced her thinking about teaching the most. She wrote the following about her second grade teacher.

> It was the day before I was to share a snack with my classmates. The

snack that I was to bring was popcorn, but unfortunately I had no idea what that was. So embarrassed and ashamed I told her I did not know what popcorn was. What occurred next was far beyond the duty of a teacher. She drove me to a grocery store and bought a big bag of popcorn seed, next we went to her home to pick up the popcorn machine and finally she drove me home where she explained the instructions to me and my mom. It felt as though our relationship was more than in-class teacher-student, more like one of friendship. She was also the only teacher who had given me a gift. At the end of the year she handed me a small wooden heart with the letter "A" inscribed on it. She put it around my neck and congratulated me for all my hard work. I don't think she ever realized what that gift meant to me. Because my parents couldn't afford to buy anything that wasn't practical I considered my wooden heart my most prized jewelry piece. I wore it for the next three years for school pictures, which brings up another story. This teacher also paid for my grade 2 pictures. But what is more incredible is that I didn't know I had to pay and she never asked me to. It's as if she truly understood my situation. I hadn't been in Canada very long, my parents spoke very little English, our food supply was coming from the food bank.... What I most admired about her was the fact that she made me feel no less than the other students. She recognized my limits (e.g.,language barrier) but didn't focus on them. She treated me with respect. She had a way of making me want to come to school. She made learning fun. She made everything very personal and on a comfortable level. The close relationship she developed with me is without a doubt a major reason why my studies went so well. I hope to hang on to what she taught me in

> the days to come when I have the opportunity to put to practice all that I learned.
>
> (Individual Writing 8/97)

Alyssha's relationship with her second grade teacher seemed to have shaped the rest of her schooling experience in a positive way. For Alyssha, the "popcorn" experience made her see that her second grade teacher was understanding about her transitional life. Alyssha and her parents were not fluent English speakers. They depended on help from the community for their basic needs and they seemed unfamiliar with everyday customs that mainstream children and their families might have taken for granted. Her teacher's response seemed to be one filled with an "ethic of caring" which "counsels us to meet each living other in a caring relation" (Noddings, 1992, p. 111). The respect Alyssha felt her teacher afforded her struck her deeply. Respect and relationship seemed to be qualities on which Alyssha hoped to base her teaching.

> Another thing I know has influenced me is that a lot of my experiences with my teachers have been on a very personal level. And I know in regards to how I'm being shaped as a teacher, one of the most important things I think I can do is work on the relationships I build with the kids.... Even throughout high school, there have been teachers who just talk to you as though you weren't necessarily their student. They talked to you as though you were somebody important almost at a point that you were their equal.
>
> (Individual Response 11/97)

Again, we see Alyssha placing respect for students as a high priority. She remembered how teachers who talked with respect to her and how much she appreciated it.

As Alyssha began her first placement, she wrote these words when I asked her to reflect over the previous week's experiences in her first four week placement.

> All encompassing and overwhelming. I find myself breathing new air, yet struggling for the next breath while determination wills me to survive. (Reflection Fragment 9/18/97)

Alyssha appeared to be alarmed at the pace her cooperating teacher seemed to expect her to perform. By the end of the fourth day in her first placement, she believed she was teaching 45% of the time. She checked her practicum schedule and discovered that, at that rate, in two weeks time, she would be teaching all day, everyday. When Alyssha double checked with her cooperating teacher, she seemed to be under the impression that it was not nearly as much as Alyssha perceived it to be. When I asked Alyssha to take the matter to the university facilitator so she could intervene she responded by saying,"...I feel very uneasy about telling my teacher, because of the fact, she said today, 'I won't evaluate you on the amount you do or the quality you do'...I didn't understand how she planned to evaluate me" (Group Conversation 9/18/97). It looked like once again, evaluation, would shape Alyssha's experience. Near the end of her first placement, I asked her to reflect on my question of what kind of teacher she saw herself becoming.

> The type of teacher I had always imagined I'd be and the type of teacher I am becoming are different, yet both are me. This experience has taught me to be so much more than I had imagined was possible for myself.... (Reflection Fragment 10/1/97)

Her words in the above writing speak to two storylines Alyssha negotiated during her practicum. The story she imagined she would experience in practicum was one in which she saw herself as a quiet person who found it hard to speak out. "I was the quiet one and nobody really kinda helped me along with that" (Group Conversation 9/24/97). The second story was one in which she became more confident, more willing to be firm and exercise authority. She said her cooperating teacher helped her compose a different story by the modeling she provided. She continued with this thought:

> ...this is finally the first time, I'm becoming a little more than that [shy and uncertain] and I really like it. Because I was so scared that I...I didn't think I could raise my voice...and I'm doing that, and it feels so wonderful. That's why I like her modeling...it's nice to have that model because the kids are used to it and I'm learning so I can apply it.
>
> (Group Conversation 9/24/97)

In her first placement Alyssha encountered children who seemed to have difficulty establishing relationships with other classmates. The children also seemed to have trouble accepting Alyssha in the role of teacher.

> The thing is, Victor's an adaptation student, I cannot get through to him. I talk to him, I try to be his friend, I'm firm with him, I lecture him. It doesn't matter. I'm trying to teach a lesson, he's scribbling all over his desk. I just yell, "What are you doing there?" And the class kinda laughed, they thought it was funny that he's getting in trouble by me. And he's smirking, he's laughing, and I said, "Get out." He sat out there for probably only ten minutes. During recess time, I brought him in and I, this is the funny part, he says, "What? You expect me to be an angel all my life?" Like, where is this coming from? I tried to make a deal with him somehow. He thinks he's not getting noticed in school, he thinks nobody wants to be his

> friend. I fully understand that. I also reminded him, "Remember last week, when I saw that you were working good in P.E. and I asked you to be my assistant?" He helped me put away basketballs and things like that. "Yeah, okay, okay." So we made a deal, that if he were to be more productive, he would be my assistant. So right away, he wanted to do something. He punched some holes in student workbooks. He went back to his seat and within four minutes, he wants to do something else! I said, "No, now it's time to work." "You're mean, you don't let me do anything." Okay. So I lost. I ran out of ideas on what to do with him. I'm tired of making deals, because he won't remember, or it won't work.... All I know, the home situation isn't very good, because they've just come from Yugoslavia, they barely speak any English, I don't know.... He has no social skills. Like, when we're doing P.E. basketball, I'll say bounce the ball gently, he'll throw it at somebody's head. He does it to himself, which is unfortunate, but I don't know how to get through to him. I've run out of ideas.
>
> (Group Conversation 10/1/97)

As I listened to Alyssha tell this story, I thought about how much it paralleled her own early schooling stories. I wondered if she would make the connection as well. As she told the story and, in subsequent tellings, she did not seem to see the parallel stories. She realized that Victor was different and tried making a "deal" with him. After several "deals" fell through, Alyssha felt like she was losing. She began to look for other possible reasons that made this child's behavior appear so different from the other children. She wondered if it was because he and his family were recent immigrants, or was it the language barrier or even what she saw as his lack of social skills. She seemed to wonder if there was anything else she could do that would enable her to make a connection with the child labeled as an "adaptation" student.

Alyssha developed a strong teaching identity in this placement and believed she had established a good relationship with the children in her second placement class. She was surprised when even the students who were storied as "good students," challenged her authority as teacher. The following excerpt describes what happened when she was left alone and in charge of the Division II classroom.

> One of the grade six boys, everyone loves him, he's adorable. I tell him, okay free time is over, pull out your math. "I don't want to. What do you want?" I said, "No, you don't use that tone with me." It didn't work. He doesn't care...I think they're just trying to test me and see what they can get away with. Maybe I do have to become more firm. I thought I was being firm enough. I have no idea. So the only thing I'm happy about the problems I'm encountering now, with the adaptation students is a given, everybody has them. So it's not like she's looking at me like I'm really messing up with this boy. It's not like the whole class is going wild around me.
>
> (Group Conversation 10/3/97)

Alyssha seemed to take the challenge in stride, but paused to rethink if her quiet shy side was still more visible that her firm side. The issue of how she related to the "adaptation student" was viewed as a reality to be expected in today's classrooms. Again, Alyssha did not seem to move beyond the label. Somehow, it seemed okay to expect trouble with the adaptation students, but when she experienced trouble with regular students it surprised her. What she seemed worried about most was the possible loss of connection with the whole class.

The words of Floden and Clark (1988) once again came to mind. Beginning teachers "want to be liked by their students.... Yet they cannot avoid responsibilities such as maintaining classroom discipline..." (p.512). Alyssha spoke to these thoughts in the following excerpt.

> But when something like that happens, do you lose that connection with them? No child is going to be impressed with a teacher that gets them in trouble. Because that happened yesterday, do you think our relationship is kinda....
>
> (Group Conversation 10/3/97)

She spoke to the Conversation Group about the possibility of losing the connection she had established after the class challenged her authority. When the cooperating teacher found out about the incident, the class was told to write letters of apology to Alyssha for their actions. Alyssha seemed to feel guilty that she had gotten the students in trouble but did not oppose the cooperating teacher's actions. Alyssha, as well as the rest of the Conversation Group, understood what MacKinnon (1989) wrote, "Long before the practicum began, each of the student teachers 'knew' that it would be the make or break component of their four-year BEd program" (p.12-13). As a result of the constant desire to earn a good evaluation, Alyssha unwillingly accepted the letters of apology from her students. Having lived through this experience, she continued to work on the relationship she had with these children. When it was time for Alyssha to leave this classroom setting, there were many teary good-byes.

In her second placement with a younger group of children, Alyssha seemed to struggle with the transition from Division II to Division I. Working with older children seemed easier and the relationships she had established seemed worthier somehow. Alyssha wrote the following reflection.

> I feel like I've moved away from being a teacher and friend to teacher and mother. The older students seemed to be more selective as to whom they called friend. So it was a special and honorable feeling to know that was what I was to them. It seems as these little guys will hug anyone that walks through their door. They're looking for someone to care for them, not necessarily to talk to. I hope once I start teaching again, I'll be able to form a stronger relationship with them.
>
> (Individual Writing 10/8/97)

The discriminating standards of Division II aged children had been replaced by the undiscriminating hugs of the Division I aged children. This move, as Alyssha experienced it, from teacher/friend to teacher/mother was a storyline she hoped would readjust once she started teaching in her second placement.

Alyssha began to search for ways to build positive relationships with her new second placement children. She described teaching situations in which she solicited teaching ideas from them in order she says, to give them more ownership. Children were encouraged to bring in ideas for activities, books they wanted to read and science experiments. Alyssha believed that good communication between herself and her students would help them develop good relationships. One way she found she could encourage communication was by setting up a class mailbox.

> Another good experience is the mailbox I set up there in class. The things that the kids write to me and I write back to them has made a very special relationship, because they always said that they never thought the teachers would write them letters the way I have. The things I get from them are absolutely incredible.
>
> (Individual Response 12/97)

Another way Alyssha chose to build relationships with the children she was teaching, was by talking with them on a personal basis. When I asked her if she had been able to establish the kind of connections she had hoped for, she shared the following stories.

> Along with what you just said about how you make those connections, I think it really depends on the teacher, what your priority is. I know the way I make mine, is that I begin on a very personal level. The connections we have, have to do basically with their personal lives. And I think it drives my cooperating teacher crazy! Like with Van. The way we've started talking is he wrote in his journal one time a joke. And I told him it was so good, that I recopied it and I have it in my own file and I showed it to him. He was very surprised. "You like them that much?!" And ever since then, when it's time to get dressed for recess or...he's coming up, "I've got a joke for you." Stuff like that, she doesn't like that. Even today, this morning, she said she wants me to take the run of the morning activities. Do attendance, do calendar activity and then go into journal. And I got so caught up with sharing stories about our weekend and what everybody was doing, that I forgot to do it... But I thought it was a lot more valuable just to share our little stories rather than the morning activities.
>
> (Group Conversation 11/12/97)

Alyssha began to tell the Conversation Group how she thought her cooperating teacher was reacting to her personal conversations with the children she taught. Establishing relationships through personal interaction was something Alyssha had spoke about doing all her life. This kind of personal interaction seemed to make the strongest connections. Getting to know the children was clearly a priority with Alyssha as she became so engrossed with what the children were sharing, she completely forgot to follow the morning routine her cooperating teacher asked her to do.

Alyssha spoke about special relationships she had established in the eight week placement. What follows is her telling of two such relationships. One, which she saw as rewarding and another where she was having difficulty.

> Well, there's always Sumner. Yesterday was a bad day, we had a sub in the morning. He seems to have these days... I noticed how, you know how physically you can tell he's going in that direction and the sub reached him before I did, so she's, "Do this, do this..." Finally she gave up and he walked out and she starts doing his work! I'm staring at her...I nearly freaked out! How can you, as a professional educator, be doing this child's work? Like after she did five questions for him,she goes, "Sumner, take the pencil and do it again." So she left him, she knew she lost the battle, and she went out. Immediately I said, "Sumner, are you going do your work or not?" He shrugged. I said, "You need to go outside." I went out and I talked to him and I said, "Are you going to come in and do work or not?" "I don't know." "Okay, you'll just have to stay here until you make up your mind." I gave him the test.... So I asked him, "Do you want to continue this out here or in the class?" "Well, I'll come back." There's just a certain approach you need to have.
>
> (Group Conversation 12/3/97)

Alyssha seemed to recognize that some children needed to be approached differently than the rest. She reacted in disgust when she saw the way the substitute teacher was handling a difficult situation. After the substitute relinquished her control, Alyssha rushed in and began to use the "choices" strategy. When that did not work, she separated the child from the rest of the class in order to have a one on one talk with him about his behavior. Afterwards, she gave him the opportunity to decide whether he would continue to be separated or return to class and the other students. In an individual response she revisits this experience and how that relationship seemed to grow.

> Probably one of the best experiences I've had in this class was with that little boy Sumner. About how proud he was to get his work done and to show me. I liked the way that that turned out because ever since we had that little chat in the hallway and ever since then, I can see that he's kinda going back into that mood, I go up to him and give him a nudge and he knows I'm kidding when I say "Are we going to have one of those days?" And so he usually ends up giggling, shaking his head and gets back to work. So I'm glad that we have an understanding about that. That was something really wonderful to experience. I think overall my experiences in this class have been really great.
>
> (Individual Response 12/97)

Alyssha liked establishing relationships based on personal interactions. However, she found that some children reacted differently to this kind of interaction.

> The only other student that pops into my mind is one little girl, Veronica, somewhere, I think something went overboard in our relationship. I think what happened is she thinks we're too much friends. Because now I notice I'll say "You need to be doing this..." and she giggles and a lot of the time she says "Do we really have to?" And it's just all the time...because now when she shows me this work and it's absolutely wrong, there's no question about it, that she can get away with this, I

> say, "Sorry, but you need to redo it again." You can tell, her heart's just breaking, like, how can you do this to me, you're my friend. That's the only one that kinda went too far...
>
> (Group Conversation 12/3/97)

Alyssha described the relationship she developed with Veronica as one that went "overboard." It became a struggle to be seen as teacher more than friend. It seemed as though the child now thought their relationship granted her special privileges and Alyssha found it difficult to work with the child. She recognized that somehow the child had misinterpreted the relationship.

After her practicum period, Alyssha graduated and was the first participant in the group to start substitute teaching. She left the city, but did not come to my office to say good-bye. Alyssha and I knew we would continue to correspond through e-mail and Alyssha would return to the city again for a few more Conversation Group sessions. I wished her good luck and waited to hear from her.

Kacee.

I came to know Kacee as an undergraduate student in a science methods course I was teaching. This was the same class the other participants were members of as well. Kacee sat at a round table with Alyssha and three male students. The other students at her table seemed to appreciate her organizational skills and her nurturing manner. They quickly nicknamed her "table mommy."

Kacee was storied by the Conversation Group and myself in much the same way. She seemed to be regarded as the caretaker in the group. At the beginning of the practicum semester she was the one who made sure everyone remembered assignments due at their practicum seminar and responsibilities assigned to the group by the cooperating school. Operating in the caretaker role in the Conversation Group, Kacee either volunteered to start conversations if the other participants were hesitant or she would encourage one of the others to begin. Whenever anyone in the group was experiencing a dilemma at school she was always quick to point out the positives, often offering consoling perspectives. I invited Kacee to participate in this inquiry because I believed the group would benefit greatly from all the "table mommy" qualities she had exhibited during the course. I saw her as the nurturing element necessary for group cohesiveness. Kacee also had much more experience working with children than any of the other participants. That experience and growing up in a different province, thus possibly providing the group with a different geographic perspective influenced my decision to invite her to the study.

Kacee grew up in eastern Canada. She has lived in the same mainstream neighborhood in the same house all her life. As she shared some of her childhood memories, she recalled how she could walk down the street and "know every person along the way" (Group Conversation 4/7/97). Her house seemed to be a favorite gathering place for her neighborhood friends. Kacee described her house as "being filled with kids going in and out all the time" (Group Conversation 4/7/97). She also spoke to the Conversation Group about venturing out of the suburbs and exploring the "big city" with her teenaged friends.

Jarod - ...Big city...Crime?

Kacee - That's funny, 'cause we think, like, we're close to the states and we think the states have all the crime.

Jarod - It's way faster paced than here.

> Kacee - Yeah, definitely way faster paced but it doesn't, like, people say "How do you walk down the street? I just walk down the street. (laughter)
>
> Jarod - No big deal.
>
> Kacee - No, it didn't bother us.
>
> Jarod - Was it expensive?
>
> Kacee - Yeah, probably, but like we'd walk down the street and we checked out everybody else, but then like...I would never go to New York because it's so violent.

Living in the suburb of a large metropolitan area facilitated school sponsored trips to museums and live theater. "One really nice thing about living so close to the city was that we got to go into the city for a lot of trips and things. We'd go in and all through school we saw all the major plays like *Les Miserables* and the *Phantom of the Opera* (Group Conversation 4/7/97).

As Kacee recalled her elementary schooling experience, she remembered it as pleasant. In this transcript excerpt Kacee spoke about her second grade teacher and how her teacher motivated her in math.

> I liked elementary school, I never really had a problem. I guess you could call me the "goody-two shoes" of the class. I was always the one to raise my hand and answer the questions. I liked my grade two teacher mostly because once she found something you excelled at...because I excelled in math, then I got to go to the math corner and there were math puzzles and things like that and I remember really liking math and always doing my math very fast so I could get to the better math. I liked that a lot. (Group Conversation 9/24/97)

Kacee seemed pleased to share the storylines of pleasant achievement and growing up happy in elementary school. She described herself as being the child with a hand up at every opportunity, whether she knew the answer or not.

She liked volunteering answers and excelled in math. If there was an area that she felt she had trouble with in school, it was language arts, especially reading. Kacee remembered that reading seemed to be a mechanized exercise. Skills were stressed and Kacee could see no fun in reading. Instead, reading was experienced as a chore. So much so, remnants of the memory lingered in thoughts concerning how to teach.

> I had trouble in my language arts area.... I always remember it being forced down my throat, so I'm really worried about that, going into elementary teaching, forcing things down kids' throats that they don't like....
>
> (Group Conversation 4/97)

These remnants of memory associating learning with forcing things down students' throats was something Kacee was keenly aware of and did not want this notion to be one repeated in her learning to teach story. She did not want to be a teacher remembered by her students as one who forced knowledge down their throats.

In retrospect, the only memory of reading not being a chore, was one of a teacher who read Anne of Green Gables (Montgomery,1908) to Kacee's class for pleasure and did not ask the children to dissect the selection afterwards.

> Everyday after lunch, we would sit in our desks and he would read a chapter of Anne of Green Gables. That was all that we did with that book. We didn't discuss it. We just listened and enjoyed the book.
>
> (Individual Writing 8/97)

This was, for her, what made reading inviting. She was able to enjoy the story without being preoccupied about wondering what questions might be asked afterwards.

One of the questions asked of everyone in the study was "What led you to want to be a teacher?" Early in the study, Kacee shared a story of how her mother's involvement in the Girl Guides of Canada and subsequently her own involvement seemed to influence her decision to be a teacher. As she became more involved in helping her mother with younger Girl Guide members she realized how much she enjoyed that experience.

> Since about grade six I've wanted to be a teacher. I think it's mostly because my Mom got me involved in the Girl Guide movement but at a higher level. She was a Guider. I always came to whatever she was doing and helped out the younger kids and I found I really liked that. (Group Conversation 10/97)

Kacee enjoyed helping out so much, she continued to participate every summer thereafter in the roles of volunteer, girl guide leader, camp counselor, program director and assistant camp director. After high school, Kacee began to explore the possibilities of enrolling in a teacher education program.

Kacee wanted to go to a teachers' college near home but soon discovered the process problematic. Not only did it seem nearly impossible to gain admittance, but the program was not what she envisioned would help the most in her teacher education. One of Kacee's concerns was that there did not seem to be enough time allotted for the course work or the practicum to establish a firm understanding of teaching. This shorter program did not seem to meet her needs. This meant Kacee would have to move away from home in order to get into a Faculty of Education program which did not appear as limiting as the one in her home province. Although it took her away from her firmly planted roots, Kacee liked the program in this province better, so much so, she made the decision to move. She believed she would be better prepared when it was time to be in her own classroom. Learning to teach for Kacee meant being well prepared by participating in a program which gave her ample opportunities to be in teaching situations. This would give her the time she believed was necessary to ease into the role of teacher to be comfortable and confident.

Long distance calls home and going home during holidays became a way of life for Kacee. Being so far away from home was for her very lonely in the beginning. Negotiating a different landscape became easier as the semesters rolled by. New friends and established relationships seemed to ease the separation she felt living away from home. Even so, whenever she needed family reassurance, she knew it was only a long distance phone call away.

As Kacee began her practicum experience, the skills she learned through her camp experience were seen by some of us in the study as an asset during practicum. Kacee had the ability to remember and learn names quickly and to easily keep track of the children in her class wherever they went.

Keeping her life on the school landscape separate from her life off the school landscape, also seemed to come from her camp experience. Just like when she was working in summer camp, Kacee felt in order to keep inner peace during practicum, time for herself apart from the children for whom she was responsible was essential.

> Keeping myself separate, like leaving the classroom and leaving it in the classroom has always been a strategy of mine. Because if I take things with me too much I drive myself insane...I need an outlet...I would say in my camping experience, we only had one day off...I wouldn't see my kids all day, because I just needed that break.... It's not that you're not ever thinking about them, it's that you need to put a totally different focus...and

> so when I take a break, and I come back to it, I see things in different ways and I find I analyze things better. So I always need my break, whether it's...I'm not saying like, my first year I'm going to be so focused on school, it will be hard to do that, but I will need one day when I say no school today, and I do that now when I focus on school work and university classes. Today is my relaxed day. I'm sure it's my parent's influence. Like I'm sure my mom has said to me "Kacee, take a break, leave it there and come back to it in an hour." That's kinda what we do. (Individual Response 2/98)

Kacee seemed to think that the way to not be overwhelmed by her responsibility for the group of children in her care was by taking some personal time to take care of herself and gain a different perspective on what was going on.

Kacee's early work experience within the group structure of the Girl Guides of Canada seemed to shape the way she worked during her practica. The relationships she formed with the children she taught seemed to be formed as a group first, then one on one.

> I view the group as a group, they're one identity all together. So I get to know them all together. And to me, establishing that kind of group sense is the first thing I would do...I would go in and we would do activities that would incorporate that group sense so we are all a group. I also think it's my control thing...but when I go in, I know that I need to have some type of control over these kids...I go in and do what I would like to.... (Individual Response 2/98)

Kacee's camp experience was one that was based on group activities. Keeping everyone in a group facilitated the "control" factor which seemed necessary. Kacee seemed to gain a more comfortable feeling when she established a "group sense" with the children in her care.

When we talked about how former teachers shaped our experiences in school, these were Kacee's thoughts.

> I think...the teachers that I have had, whether poor teachers or good teachers, have influenced me in some proportion. I remember a science teacher who loved to take us outdoors and do things and all kinds of active hands-on stuff... That's one of the things that I have taken with me is that my science classes are always with some type of hands-on types of things. Not just with science but with everything else as well.... My grade seven teacher...used to have us brainstorm ideas for our story and when somebody came up with a suggestion... we would write on that topic. She wouldn't always be the one telling us what topic to write on.... (Individual Response 11/19/97)

Kacee still seemed to be more comfortable working in a group setting, but believed it was important to gain student input in order to promote students' ownership of their own learning.

Kacee enjoyed incorporating hands-on activities and inviting her children to contribute their own ideas during her practice teaching.

> That's one of the things that I have taken with me is that my science classes are always with some type of hands-on types of things. Not just with science but with everything else as well, not just copying notes or doing things like just reading from a book. I like to get the students' opinions on things and I like them to be actively involved in what we're doing plus my other concern is that I would like to be doing more of what students come up with. In other words, getting student ideas for lessons and things like that. I don't feel comfortable doing things like that right

> now, because of the student teaching situation and we can't go over in science. I think if I was in my own classroom and we started really going into a science lesson and it was really going well and someone suggested an extension, I would more likely go on with that lesson after recess, like instead of doing language arts and put language arts later into the week because I think that is very important that you take student ideas and use them for your lesson so they feel that they have an impact on what they are learning.
>
> (Individual Response 11/19/97)

For her science lessons Kacee encouraged children to bring in their own experiments. In Social Studies, children were encouraged to bring in traditional clothing associated with their cultures. Time constraints coupled with that of evaluation seemed to limit this desire. Another way Kacee attempted to establish stronger relationships with her second placement children in Division II, was by sharing some of her own experiences much like she remembered her grade seven teacher doing.

> So...my grade seven teacher was very personable and she let us into her life as well as talking about our own problems.... But we also knew a lot about her and what her life was like. I liked that and I like to take that with me.
>
> (Individual Response 11/19/97)

One of the experiences Kacee chose to share with her Division II class, was related to the science lesson the class was studying. Kacee took the opportunity the lesson presented and shared her experience of working in an asphalt plant.

> In my science lesson the other day we were talking about separating mixtures. We were talking about sieves and I mentioned that when I

> worked in the asphalt plant that we used the sieves for the testing. The shocked looks on all the students' faces, that I worked in an asphalt plant was very amusing to them. I think it kinda gave them more of an insight on who I am and that I'm not just a teacher and that's not all I've been doing all my life and they know a little more about me. Maybe that will let them realize I'm a person too and maybe they can realize that I know that they have personalities and they like to do different things.
>
> (Individual Response 11/19/97)

Kacee's experience in elementary school also seemed to shape the speed at which she learned her children's names. She remembered as a child, she felt invisible sometimes when the teacher and her other classmates learned the names of the "difficult" children first, and not hers. She, on the other hand, loved school, was cooperative and did not bring notice to herself by acting out and found it hard to understand why the teacher could not learn her name.

> I was always the quiet one in class and no one ever knew my name and it always made me mad that all the people who were making the fuss and doing things wrong, the teacher knew their name but when I asked a question they didn't have any clue what my name was.
>
> (Group Conversation 9/18/97)

Kacee did not want the children she was teaching to feel like she had in school. She learned her children's names by the second day in each placement.

Kacee was the first participant in the Conversation Group to encounter Eddie, who was storied by all of us as the "runner." This was the first story she told as it occurred in her first placement.

> I want to talk about Eddie,one of the little kids. When we were introduced on Monday morning, the teacher was telling us about this "runner" in her

> class, who just bolts at anything, scared the living daylights out of me! So I don't want to be in this class, this kid runs. But he is very good if you're consistent. He has not, no I think once, since I've been there and that was Tuesday, because we hadn't laid down a pattern, a routine of what to do. But he's very good, swiftest kid in the class. Understands things like this, makes up stories, yeah, like unbelievable. And very good with fairness. If you can state to him why something would be unfair to do it that way, or give him a specific reason why he cannot do this in this point and time he will say "Fine, no problem." He will understand that completely. If you can't give him a reason, he's off the wall...like we were reading this morning. They were doing authors' chair, so they read their own stories. He read his first and then he went back to his desk to do something. So the teacher asked him "to please come and sit down. We listened to your story. And now will you give the same respect and listen to other people's stories?" Like, I don't even think it hit him that he wasn't paying attention to other people's stories, he was just finishing up his story and putting the booklet in his desk. So as soon as she said that to him, came right back, sat down, listened, participated, gave comments to other people's stories.... Later I was taking them back from music to gym and he was the first in line and he left and I thought oh my God, he's left on me, so I called across the library and said, "I haven't said to go yet." He said, "Oh, well you said we were going to gym" and he just thought I meant go, and he came right back. I had no problems.
> (Group Conversation 9/18/97)

Kacee was alarmed when she learned that a child in her first placement, in a Division I classroom, was known for running out of the classroom when he was upset. This behavior seemed to focus her attention on the "runner." As she spent more time with the "runner," she seemed secure in the knowledge that should there be any problem, the reasoning strategy could be exercised and the imminent threat of bolting averted. In another conversation, Kacee shared how she handled the first time the "runner" bolts.

> Story of the week, I probably should talk about my buddy, Eddie. On Friday, the cooperating teachers all had a meeting and so we were left in the classroom for twenty minutes before lunch, and I was supposed to read Charlotte's Web which we've had fun with since the beginning. So he didn't want to come to the carpet to read so I said he had a choice. He could sit at his desk or he could come to the carpet. He chose to sit in his desk, but then he made a paper airplane and was throwing it around the room and running and catching it. So I told him that he could sit in his desk or I was going to write his name on the board which means he has to stay in for recess. And he wouldn't sit in his desk so I wrote his name on the board. And I went back to sit down and finish reading Charlotte's Web and he got up and erased his name off the board and ran out of the room. Now I know this guy runs. I've been told before that he runs out of the school and everything. So, at that point I should've called the office, but I didn't know how to do it...never worked a PA system before. So I just, because it was ten minutes to lunch, I just left it and the kids were telling me he was standing at the door after when I was reading the story...I knew he was there which made me feel a little better. But that kind of stressed me out and I wasn't really happy about that. I had a little talk with him when he came back from lunch and it didn't go very well, because we have this system in the classroom, if you're sitting quietly the

> teacher's assistant will tap your desk and you can go to lunch. So I was having a little chat with him at his desk and the teacher's assistant saw that he was sitting quietly and taps his desk. So, he's like, I'm going to lunch, and he was gone! And I wasn't about to chase him, because he was right, someone tapped his desk and, I didn't want him to think that I was going against that as well. So, he's a little handful and I was a little upset about that.

In this piece of transcript Kacee began by referring to her unhappy task of reading Charlotte's Web (E.B. White, 1952) to the class while the teacher is out of the room. This required that the children sit on the carpet which was a procedure the Eddie had trouble following. She chooses to use the "choices" strategy only to have her reading disrupted by the child's disruptive behavior. Kacee followed the disruption with another round of "choices." This time it did not work and when Kacee followed through with the consequence, the child bolted. That reaction was followed by Kacee questioning her ability to handle the situation. She relaxed a bit knowing that the child was nearby and had not left the school grounds. Afterwards, Kacee tried to talk to him, but was caught in a web of someone else's rules. As a result, the child left before Kacee could come to an understanding with him. The lack of closure I imagine she must have felt was upsetting. After reflecting on the incident, Kacee had this to say:

> I didn't know if I handled it in the right way, or I also didn't know if that's the way I would handle it if I had not been in someone else's class, because I was trying to follow her rules. I don't know what I would have done in my own classroom and I still don't know what I would have done in my own classroom. So I feel kind of lost in that sense, because I don't know what is appropriate or what is.... He has to learn how to participate I

> think. Like he can't always go off and do his own thing, he has to learn that life is about coming together and doing things, like there are some things you just have to do. Right? So, and I didn't know what reasoning to go with. Like, if I had thought of some reasoning, I tried. Respect other people instead of disrupting them, but that didn't work.
>
> (Group Conversation 9/24/97)

Kacee questioned whether she would have handled the situation in the same manner had it been her own classroom. She understood the "runner" reacted to situations in a different way from the other children which led her to question how children of difference struggle to live in a world full of rules and expectations of conformity. She tried the prescription for curbing the behavior but that did not work. The difference between what she might have done in her own classroom and the difference between the way her cooperating teacher wanted it done was creating a tension that left her unsure of her storyline as the authority in the classroom. That experience led Kacee to write the following:

> I feel as though I am a police officer and not a teacher. But learning that goes with the job. But I am policing for her rules. It hopefully will be easier for mine.
>
> (Reflection Fragment 10/1/97)

Kacee seemed to believe that "policing" was necessary in the classroom but hoped that in her classroom, the enforcement of rules would not be as difficult.

Kacee seemed apprehensive about making the transition from Division I to Division II for her second eight weeks. At first, she seemed worried she might not be able to handle questions about subject matter asked by the Division II children. In Tardif's (1985) work with student teachers on becoming a teacher, wrote about this common apprehension around subject matter knowledge. She wrote, "Being a teacher in the eyes of the student teacher means being an expert in the subject area taught" (p.142). After a period of adjustment in her second placement, Kacee's thinking shifted.

> Kacee - I would say Division II doesn't scare me anymore in that sense. I think first of all just the experience of doing it....
>
> E. - wasn't as bad as you had imagined it?
>
> Kacee - Exactly, and the fact that I have always been open to, I have no problem with me making mistakes, letting the kids see me make mistakes, that doesn't bother me at all. I like to get their input. It doesn't bother me anymore, because if we don't know it, then we'll go find out together. I don't have any problems with that. I think that kind of input from them makes it their class. Our class together instead of my classroom. And it helps me because it takes the pressure off of me.
>
> (Conversation 2/98)

Before Kacee began her second placement with older children, she seemed anxious. After she spent some time coming to know the children, she seemed more comfortable. Kacee found that by allowing the students to know that she made mistakes and was not an "expert," invited her students to look for answers together. Kacee had found a way to negotiate a new story of teacher as "expert." Soliciting input, and allowing herself to make mistakes in front of the children seemed to take "the pressure off."

Throughout the study it seemed Kacee's experience working in the Girl Guide organized group setting and not seeing difference as in racial difference often influenced her practice. Kacee seemed more comfortable working with children in an instructional setting first, when she thought of them as a group entity and second, when she thought of them in the "colorblindness" notion.

Several authors (Bateson, 1994; Berlak, 1996: Cochran-Smith, 1995; Paley, 1989; and Sleeter, 1995)
have written about this notion.

> I honestly never looked at racial features or whatever. It never comes to mind. I don't know if that's a good thing or not. I honestly don't focus on it, but it doesn't mean that it doesn't come to my mind...like Alyssha was talking about the native girl in my class and I honestly had to search my mind to figure out who was the native girl, because she just doesn't come across as native, because I don't think of people and culture. In their culture, that's what I was thinking. I don't look at that. In fact it might be a good idea to do that and you could celebrate and bring different cultures in but it just never occurred to me.
>
> (Conversation 2/98)

Relating to her students as a group more often than individuals seemed to promote the "color blindness" notion. Kacee began to wonder if not focusing on individual differences was a good thing. She seemed to become aware that promoting cultural differences had never occurred to her. Kacee began to recognize that this was an awakening to understanding that she could explore the children's backgrounds in order to better understand her students and help her students understand each other better.

Throughout the study, Kacee continued to encourage others in the group as well as myself. During the initial days of their practicum experience Kacee was very concerned as to how the others were doing and made a concentrated effort to check in with the rest of the conversation group.

> We meet for lunch and we try to meet at recess, like I run around trying to find people, see how they're doing....

(Group Conversation 9/18/97)

Although she seemed to think that others perceived her as being very confident in the classroom, she still seemed tentative about her own teaching ability. She reiterated that others perceived her as more confident than she really was, and after reflecting on the above excerpt, she stated that checking in on everyone was also a way to comfort herself and allay any fears she had. Her fears seemed to be focused on what she saw as the massive number of little things that beginning teachers must learn to juggle and incorporate every day into their already hectic schedules.

> ...yet I feel insecure of administration tasks and covering different amounts of information in such strict periods of time and I feel that I don't exactly know what it's going to be like until I actually get in there and do it and I don't think I'm going to have that confidence until I can actually see if I do it.
>
> (Individual Response 3/97)

As I thought about what Kacee said in her individual response it struck me that once again she was expressing the uncertainty of running a classroom until she was "actually" there. These comments seemed similar to her apprehension of moving from teaching children in Division I to teaching children in Division II. Kacee's desire to make learning more enjoyable by not letting strict time limits constrain her teaching resurfaced again.

Throughout the study Kacee hinted that she might not be as comfortable as she appeared to be in the classroom. The statements were small and almost imperceptible. The Conversation Group seemed to believe that she was making those statements in an effort to make everyone else more comfortable. It was just a "table mommy" thing to do. Towards the end of the study when I asked her to read over some of my preliminary writing, she reiterated once more that she was often perceived to be more confident than she actually was.

> I would say it's a big thing that I project this image that I have all the confidence in the world even though I don't. Because I've been told a lot of times, "Wow, you look so comfortable, you look like you know what you are talking about." I could just be rambling on, not knowing what in the world I'm doing and just hoping I'm coming across like I know it. So I think the way I express myself, I don't know how I do that but the way that I do, I come across as very confident and very knowing what I want to say...whereas I don't feel that way at all. I don't feel I have the confidence.
> (Conversation 2/98)

It was during the first group conversation that Kacee and I discussed the possibility of her living a "cover story." Cover stories are stories that reflect certainty, success and a view of teachers as "experts" (Clandinin and Connelly 1995). She insisted she had not lived a "cover story" and I wondered if, in time, and within the safety of the group, Kacee would realize, perhaps that she had lived cover stories.

> E.-There are very few people that you trust enough to really let them know who you are, because you're living that cover story...and that's why I'm hoping that this group, the more often we meet, the faster, the easier, it will be for us to get away from the cover stories and get down to the nitty gritty stuff. You know...
>
> Kacee - That makes me laugh because I've always been told that I live the Beaver Cleaver life...and we were the oddballs that had an actual family and didn't have that type of problem, so I always felt out of place because I didn't have those problems like that.

> E. - Did you make up problems every once in a while? (group laughter) Was that your cover story?
>
> (Group Conversation 4/7/97)

In September, Kacee was the first to make reference to a cover story.

> Kacee - I'm next? Jarod gets to go last again? Wow, you're just (group laughter) I don't care. I'm having a great time.
>
> E.- That's okay, Kacee. (group laughter)
>
> Kacee - You sure this isn't part of my cover story? No, I'm having a good time. I'm doing my first lesson tomorrow. I'm kinda nervous about that. But, not too bad.
>
> (Group Conversation 9/18/97)

As I remembered these snippets of recorded conversations and others from non-recorded conversations, I began to realize that Kacee had been trying to reveal the extent of how anxious she was about her teaching story. When we had a conversation in February, 1998 after she had completed her practicum, I found it difficult to understand what she was trying to say. I found myself still unable to comprehend just how strongly she felt making that statement that she did not feel confident about teaching at all. It was also about this time that Kacee mentioned that she was considering an internship when she returned to her home province. She defined the internship as working in a classroom but not having the autonomy or all the responsibilities associated with being the classroom teacher. She remarked that when she first started her camp leadership experience she felt as though she was not ready then either. She felt it was probably a case of "cold feet."

> I don't know what the problem is. I don't feel like I'm at the point where I am comfortable but...I was talking to my sister and she was saying she thinks it's like cold feet and its probably better to jump straight in than to

> ease your way in. Because the more you try to ease your way in the more you get cold feet. I don't have a reason why I don't feel comfortable. (Conversation 2/98)

When Kacee made reference to having "cold feet" when she began her leadership role in the Girl Guide organization, I immediately decided I would pick up on that statement and reassure her that it was indeed *just* "cold feet." The next piece of transcript clearly illustrates the magnitude of the internal difference between certainty and uncertainty she continued to negotiate.

> I think in some ways it prepared us really well for the realities of teaching. In classroom management...I found that my teacher left the classroom a lot and so I felt comfortable and just the different ideas that come from different teachers that I learned, that helped the reality of teaching...but in others, because there was always somebody there to back you up. When you have your own class, you are in charge of all these responsibilities and these children's education. That scares me. I don't feel confident enough to have that responsibility and to have these children in my care. I don't know whether that is because I am not responsible enough or because I am just, I just have cold feet and I'm scared about having that kind of responsibility. Although I've never even thought about it before in my camping experiences and things like that. I was thinking just the other day about how much responsibility I had as the assistant camp director and yet it didn't seem to faze me at all and now there is this overwhelming sense of responsibility and are you going to do things right? And how many things can go wrong? That's what I'm looking at right now.
>
> (Individual Response 3/97)

It was not until I listened to her individual taped response to my question of how the practicum prepared her for the realities of teaching, that I finally began to understand the reality behind what Kacee had tried to express with me and the Conversation Group. Kacee was so concerned about the tremendous amount of responsibility inherent to the role of teacher that she even questioned whether she was responsible at all. She returned to her memories of her camping experiences and reiterated the "cold feet" theory and how everything worked out. She seemed really concerned that she could not visualize success and instead was worried about her ability to handle the situation and how many things could go wrong. Still, I chose to believe that she would be able to overcome these doubts and was looking forward to finding a teaching position when she returned to her home province.

During our last get together Kacee announced that her real dream was one of running an educationally based outdoor camp. A few weeks after that session in April,1998, I dropped by her apartment a few days before she left for her home province. As we said our final goodbyes, she told me that she had applied for a camp counselor position at a Girl Guide facility. She had not told her parents yet and wondered how they would react. As she shared her story with me, I responded by saying that people should work in positions that make them happy. I wished her good luck but could still hear the tension in my voice, both, wishing the best for Kacee, and, at the same time, still trying to make sense of the contradiction Kacee seemed to be feeling towards pursuing a full time teaching position. As I left her apartment, the place where our conversation group had met for the majority of the study, I wondered how the study had influenced this decision she was determined to pursue. Was it her experience at the practicum school? Was there not enough response? Did she need more time in a classroom? This contradiction of confidence and comfort level really disturbed me. If Kacee, who was considered by me, the Conversation Group and her cooperating teachers to be the most confident member of their practicum cohort group, was having second thoughts after her practicum experience, how do other students who have very little confidence make it in the real world of teaching? Do their feelings of little confidence shift once they are hired and step into their own classrooms? My biggest concern of course was Kacee. I wanted her to be happy and I wanted us to continue communicating. I wanted to see how the storyline she was living might shift again.

Marjo.

Marjo was an undergraduate student in a science methods course I was teaching. She was a member of the same class in which Jarod, Alyssha and Kacee were enrolled in. Marjo brought a smile to my face with every greeting. Her public facade was one which conveyed a life long habit of physical fitness. Her greetings were frequently peppered with laughter and a bright smile. Throughout our conversations she appeared to be very passionate about the way she believed children should be treated in the classroom. It seemed that she thought that, since her own childhood school memories were happy and filled with extracurricular activities, privilege and opportunities to be successful, it should be that way for all children. What was noticeably absent in her stories of her elementary experience was the presence of difference. As an elementary student she did not remember encountering another student whom she would have considered different. Not being familiar with difference seemed to be the story Marjo was living as she came to university. It was one of the reasons I asked her to join the study. It seemed that her teaching practice would not escape being shaped by her personal history which was so different from the children she would be teaching. She reminded me of former student teachers I supervised who found it difficult "to vary curricular and instructional practices to accommodate differences among learners..." (Veenman 1984, p. 143).

The story she seemed to live throughout her university course work appeared to be one shaped by the notion that institutional knowledge was more valuable than her own. Marjo seemed to function in a "received knower" mode (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule, 1986) in most of her courses. On several occasions I remember watching her take careful notes on how to implement certain activities I was sharing with the class. The questions she asked were often procedural questions such as when, where and how to implement activities in order to capture the students' interests and discourage poor behavior. At times, it seemed Marjo listened to my teaching stories in an attempt to gain prescriptive methods of the "right" way to teach. The teacher education courses also appeared to have shaped Marjo's definition of the "ideal" teacher. The ideal teacher was one who followed and sought out answers from the experts, preferably at the university level. Therefore, she seemed to ask for mentorship from me and others she saw in the role of "expert" so she could make her learning more valuable. As a student of mine, Marjo appeared to compare her practice lessons against other students' lessons. As a result, it appeared that she was never really satisfied with the quality of her assignments. When I commented on her lessons, she often expressed a desire that she would willingly do whatever she needed to do in order to become a good teacher. Letting the experts fill her with knowledge was one way she seemed to believe she could become the successful teacher she wanted to be.

Marjo's story of self as "not knowing" was another reason I invited Marjo to participate in this inquiry. I hoped she would come to understand that the knowledge she brought into the experience was valuable, just as the knowledge the children she taught brought with them, was also valuable.

As Marjo approached the semester in which she would do her student teaching, she expressed her "uncertainty" about her managerial authority. As Floden and Clark (1988) wrote, beginning teachers "want to be liked by their students....Yet they cannot avoid responsibilities such as maintaining classroom discipline and assigning grades to student performance" (p. 512). Marjo knew I wanted my participants placed at a school with children of diverse backgrounds. She was anxious to experience the difference she thought she might encounter. She also knew that I had requested that the four participants be placed as one cohort on the same elementary campus. I believed this would provide opportunities for fostering trust and would enable immediate response to one another whenever they needed a space for reflection. I hoped Marjo would realize the value of her own knowing and become more of a risk taker in the classroom. I also hoped the trust she built with the Conversation Group would help her share teaching stories so she could better understand teaching children who were not like her.

Marjo was the participant who seemed to make the most adjustments to the new world in which she found herself practice teaching. In this world, Marjo encountered many diverse backgrounds, many contradictory to her own, among the children she was teaching. Although she volunteered during her college years in settings such as the food bank and the local shelter, where she had to confront difference, it was always in a one to one context. When she spoke about these encounters she always emphasized that they took place in a one to one context, for a short period of time. She seemed to think it was easier working with children and adults different from herself when the experience was limited, both in the number of persons involved and in duration. Marjo wondered if she would be able to negotiate difference as she faced the possibility of practice teaching in a crowded classroom with children from different backgrounds than herself.

Her initial fears, based on her perception of what a school designated "inner city" might be like, subsided when she met her first group of students. She saw that she could provide encouragement and understanding in a classroom where she felt there was little provided by the regular teacher. This setting tested Marjo's compassion because, as the Conversation Group soon found out, Marjo's first encounter with difference would not be with the students for whom she was responsible, but instead would be with the cooperating teacher with whom she had been placed. One of the first comments made by the cooperating teacher to Marjo was "...you will either sink or swim" (Group Conversation 9/18/97). For the next four weeks, these words would taunt Marjo and lead her to write the following fragment.

> "I know what I do not want to become."
>
> (Reflection Fragment 9/24/97)

This fragment was written the second time we met after the Conversation Group began their practicum.¶These powerful words came from a young woman who was storied by the Conversation Group and myself as an extremely sensitive, compassionate soul who always sought out the best in everyone and in every situation. These words were written when I asked Marjo to reflect on what kind of teacher she saw herself becoming. When the four week placement came to an end, I asked Marjo to write about her experience. This is what she wrote:

My first teaching experience was not what I had expected. I was disappointed because I kept hearing that student teaching would be a wonderful experience, etc. When I began student teaching, I did not feel welcomed. I was not introduced to the class on my first or second day. I introduced myself the second day. I believe that this set the tone for the next four weeks. I was not entirely myself because I never felt welcomed in this classroom.... At times it was difficult because everyone else I spoke to was having such a wonderful experience. I felt alone and that nobody would understand what I was going through. I know that I could have transferred to a different school....The main reason I didn't was the students. I loved being with them. I felt that I had a strong connection with the students. The classroom was quiet most of the time. There was a sense of fear in the classroom. When...they had a question they would not ask the teacher. They would always ask me. At times it really bothered me the way he treated his students. There are certain incidents with his students that I will not forget. I am sure they will not forget either. At times, I would ask myself, "What am I doing? Why am I here if I am not getting any support from my cooperating teacher?" I am confused about what kind of a teacher I am or will become. I do not feel prepared for the next eight weeks. Most of the teaching that I did involved passive learning. My four week placement was ending and the teacher never said thank you for being in the class, or the children enjoyed having you. Nothing was said about the evaluation either. I felt more welcomed with the supply teacher during the last day and a half than I did with my cooperating teacher for four weeks.... The supply teacher told the students that it was my last day. While I was observing in another

> classroom the students made cards for me. It was so nice for the supply teacher and students to do this for me. This made the whole experience worthwhile.
>
> (Individual Writing 10/8/97)

Marjo's written words echoed words she shared with the Conversation Group throughout her first placement. She seemed to be extremely disappointed at the end of her first four weeks. The storyline she planned to live out during her first four weeks of student teaching was one that storied her as happy and successful. Instead, she found herself living out a storyline in which she felt unwelcomed, disrespected and unvalued. She felt alone and had it not been for the connections made with her students, she might have transferred to another school. Marjo's stories seemed to be filled with anxiety and disbelief as she tried to reconcile the contradictions between the story she had in her head about what student teaching was going to be like and what her experience had been so far. Her previous experience was one in which she always felt welcomed wherever she went and was used to people showing her respect and valuing her input. Marjo's fragment revealed that she knew what she did "not want to become" (Reflection Fragment 9/24/97). It seemed that her experience in her first placement only confirmed for her what a "good" teacher was supposed to be. A good teacher was somebody who made connections with the children she was teaching by listening to them and by involving them in active learning. A good teacher was a person who the children felt safe with, a person like she saw herself to be.

Marjo's experience in her first placement seemed to work against everything she hoped would happen in her first four weeks. She no longer seemed confident about the story she composed for herself about learning to teach. She turned to her friends in the Conversation Group for support. These are her words as she recalls her first placement.

> I don't know what it would be like without the group. Well, I know I probably would not have survived my first practicum, that's for sure. Because, I know many times I was upset...and someone was always there to talk to at the school.... And I probably wouldn't have done this if it had been myself and three other different student teachers because I wouldn't know them so I wouldn't feel comfortable just, boom! just sharing my feelings with them right away like on the first and second day. (Individual Response 11/4/97)

Although Marjo often said that her connection with the children was one of the main reasons for not leaving during her first placement, her connection with the members of the Conversation Group in many ways sustained her. This enabled her to move forward in her student teaching. Marjo's personal history stories are filled with what she considered to be caring relationships. The relationships she established with the children in her first placement and in the Conversation Group kept her from transferring to another school, or worse, dropping out of student teaching altogether.

Marjo experienced her time in her first placement as one of marginalization. Her experience seemed to be shaped by a teacher who seemed to make Marjo feel unwelcomed. When she described the learning environment she wrote, "The classroom was quiet most of the time. There was a sense of fear in the classroom." (Individual Writing 10/8/97) In this setting, Marjo positioned herself in some ways as the person to whom the students could go when they had questions about a lesson. The one positive, as she saw it, was that the students were well behaved. Her experience in her second placement was much different.

In her second placement, Marjo's experience seemed focused on her perceptions of the children's abilities and behaviors. Marjo's response to the new placement echoed those of the Conversation Group.

> I kinda feel like Jarod, but in a different way. It's all brand new.... I'm having lots of problems with classroom management. It's like night and day with teachers and students and stuff. The teacher is always changing. It's hard to know what we're going to do from day to day. They [the students] never really know what's going on either...I guess the only thing is, that I am getting experience with behavioral children. You all know about Eddie, the "runner." He ran on me today.
>
> (Group Conversation 10/29/97)

Marjo told us that she tried to make connections with other children in the classroom. She revealed that the children in her second placement classroom were not like the quiet "well behaved" children in her first placement.

> Well, I can say in my class that there are a few difficult children like the runner.... There's a couple of other children who I have found very interesting. Their personalities are so strong in this class compared to my first placement class.... Like Lucy, some days I'll click with her, like yesterday I read a story, that she had chosen. She wanted to hold my hand, she was giving me hugs, but then she clicks off when it is something she doesn't want to do. She seems quite insecure. And then there's Rene. He's funny. He's a hyper kid, but he makes me laugh.... And then there's Eleese, in there who I feel is so wonderful, so smart, shares, sticks up for her friends, but she doesn't see it. That makes me kind of upset that she doesn't see, you know when you see somebody

> who has so much potential and could do so much, but they can't see it themselves and you're no, if only you could see what you can do and what you have.
>
> (Group Conversation 10/29/97)

It seemed Marjo was amazed at her own effectiveness in bringing about some attitudinal changes for the children in this second class if only for limited times. Her main concern focused once again on what she saw as her lack of classroom management skills and her inability to hold the student's interests. Although the fear Marjo said she experienced in her first placement was not found in the second placement, she did encounter many children whose behavior seemed unfamiliar to her. For example, she experienced her time in this classroom as ones in which she was constantly confronting acts of defiance like those of the "runner" and ones in which she had difficulty establishing relationships like the little girl who seemed to "click off." She found the "changing practice" of the cooperating teacher chaotic.

Her lack of exposure to difference seemed to make it very difficult for her to understand the students in this class who were openly defiant and aggressive. In the following transcript excerpt she tells of her constant "battle" with one of her students. This is a story of a child with whom all four participants had contact. All four participants storied Eddie as the "runner." Although the other participants were concerned about him, a story shared among themselves, Marjo was the one who struggled for eight weeks to negotiate some kind of working relationship with him.

> I've never had a child run away...I've never see a child run and not somebody so defiant....I've just never seen a child so, "No! I'm not going to do it!" You know how you always hear about it, but you just don't think

> it will happen to you...(his teacher) gives him his space.... He's a smart kid too. He's brilliant. He knows that I'm only there for a certain amount of time.... I know you're supposed to catch them when they're being good and give them praise, but I haven't really seen him that way.... I don't know how to reach him. He has run from me twice. It's a constant battle. (Group Conversation 10/29/97)

In this transcript excerpt we see Marjo working through a number of different possible stories in an attempt to understand her situation better. Marjo seemed confused as the child tested her story of teaching. First, Marjo seemed to wonder if her cooperating teacher was doing enough to find a way to stop the defiant behavior exhibited by the child. Was giving "him his space" enough? Her story then shifted as she realized that Eddie was capable of working at the appropriate level, so it did not seem as if it was the pressure of the school work that prompted him to run. Her story shifted once more as she wondered if it was her lack of classroom management skills which contributed to the situation. She then positioned herself as a temporary teacher, one who would not be in the classroom long enough to make a difference. Is that the problem? Marjo continued to struggle in her effort to make a connection with Eddie and to find a way to live with him. She appeared to become even more frustrated when she relied on expert prescriptive methods such as "catch them when they're good" and found that the "expert" prescriptions did not work either. Eventually, she seemed to resign herself to the possibility that she might not ever connect with the "runner."

This openly defiant behavior caught Marjo off guard, even though she had already heard stories of some children who were considered "difficult" in her second placement. As Marjo struggled to understand that she was now experiencing the "you always hear about it, but you just don't think it will happen to you..." issue, she responded in the following way.

> I guess the one thing I've got to learn is that once things started to happen it threw my whole lesson off. I've got to learn not to focus...I just found that it threw my mood...I know other things are going to happen, so now I'm a little more prepared.
>
> (Group Conversation 10/29/97)

She started to think she had found a way she could live out this story. She said, "I'm just going to focus on my lesson..." and not let the children with whom she had difficulty connecting direct her teaching. This was what she was trying to work out as she thought about what her teaching story was going to be. Marjo's struggle with her teaching story led her to examine her practice.

> I'm also working on certain things that I know I'm still having problems with in my class. There's certain areas that I feel I need to work on.
>
> (Individual Response 12/97)

Marjo recognized she was struggling to make her teaching story a successful one. Throughout the study, it appeared as though Marjo storied herself as less than able to handle the many dilemmas around difference which she encountered. Marjo's teaching experience seemed to be a little more challenging than she imagined it would be. Although she believed that there were still "certain areas" that she needed to work on, she seemed to excel at the ability to build caring relationships, especially with her students in her first placement. In the transcript excerpt that follows, Marjo began to realize just how different her background was from those of her students.

> Have you noticed in the classroom that there's lots of family problems? Like in their journals, like I've been reading and I've noticed a lot of "Oh,

> my foster dad or my dad is in trouble..." I notice that a lot of them are always tired, more than I've seen in normal classrooms to be honest with you.... We had a little girl, she moved. Her mom just stuck her head in and said, "She won't be coming in tomorrow." It was just totally out of the blue. So I was just like shocked. I've never seen that before. I guess I'm just so used to people telling someone in advance and there would be a little party...or they'll come sometimes to the door and say, "I need to take...home because I have some running around to do...."
>
> (Group Conversation 10/3/97)

Marjo seemed to be concerned about the lives of her students although many times it was difficult for her to understand or to make sense of the children's situations or their backgrounds. Marjo was clearly puzzled by the stories they told her because they were so unlike her own experience. In the above transcript segment, Marjo was clearly struggling with who these parents were in relation to their children. She began by wondering about how some children's fathers were "in trouble" and, unable to make a connection with her own background, she found it difficult to understand. She mentioned how the children in these classrooms seem so "tired," unlike the children with whom she had been classmates or unlike the children who were members of affluent schools. The first time some of the children moved without explanation or notice seemed very odd for Marjo. She described herself as "shocked." In her own schooling experience it was unusual for a child to move away without giving notice so the proper going away party could be planned. In one of our first conversations (4/97), Marjo remembered that moves were always planned moves. Her father worked in the oil business which often meant that Marjo, her two sisters and her mother moved to different cities in order to be close to her father. The girls' best interests were always the deciding factor as to whether the family moved to a certain area or not. The children Marjo found herself teaching were not experiencing moving as an opportunity. She was beginning to understand these children were moving out of economic necessity or family conflict. There were no going away parties, no goodbyes. Just gone.

Marjo's response to these experiences seemed to be one of shock. These contradictions were some of many that Marjo experienced in her border crossing into this world of difference. She seemed to experience these sudden absences of children, dads in trouble, tired kids, parents seemingly not making decisions based on educational reasons as inconceivable and found them difficult to understand. She often wondered how her students' lives would ultimately be affected.

As Marjo struggled to live out her story of a good teacher, she shared some stories about teachers who had made a difference in her own schooling. Some of Marjo's most pleasant memories were of two teachers in particular.

> My favorite teacher (in elementary) was my fourth grade teacher. What I remember most was her kindness and her friendly demeanor.... The reason I liked him (college professor) a lot was that he added humor to the class and really got to know us better. He also talked about his personal life quite a bit...he had this energy, this sense of humor and teaching style that appealed to me...he just seemed like a very compassionate and caring man.
>
> (Individual Response 11/97)

These teachers were storied as having the ability to develop a rapport with their students through humor and compassion. This created a very caring and positive space for Marjo to learn. This modeling seemed to be reflected in Marjo's interaction with the children she was teaching. She looked forward to sharing each day with the children who, she said, filled her day with laughter.

> I think it will be weird not going back everyday. I thought about that today, because I always look forward to seeing Rene. He's just so funny. He always makes me laugh. He's a hyper kid. I think there are certain things you'll miss everyday...
>
> (Group Conversation 11/19/97)

It seemed to me, as though the children who were most challenging would experience the most sense of loss when Marjo left.

> I feel like I've made a connection with most of the kids in the class. Some sooner than others. In the beginning, I could tell on the first day with certain kids. The one child I know I'm still struggling to make a connection with and I don't know if I ever will is Eddie.
>
> (Group Conversation 11/12/97)

Marjo was able to cross the border into the children's worlds, but it was a very difficult border to cross. She was successful in establishing relationships with some of the children she saw as different but sometimes wondered if other connections would happen. Marjo's efforts were rewarded with a most surprising experience which took place the last week of her eight week placement. It involved the child storied as the "runner" once more.

> Another thing I was going to say was that I noticed that some kids that you think you don't have a connection with, it's funny when it shows up, like yesterday. I almost fell over, because the teacher said, "Eddie, Miss Marjo will be leaving on Friday." And he said, "You're leaving?" I was like, oh-oh, what is his reaction going to be, and he's like, "You can't leave!" I looked at him and said, "Pardon?" And he said, "But you can't leave us." And that kinda shocked me and then the next minute he was

> being his usual self, but I was just like, "You've never shown me that you..." That really surprised me. That really shocked me.... And everybody was looking at me, like did you just hear what he said? That just kinda surprised me. It did. But it could be different on Friday. (Group Conversation 12/3/97)

Sometime during Marjo's "constant battle" with Eddie, she had been successful in connecting with him and not realized it. Happily, it was not different on Friday, her last day, as she suspected it might be. This surprising response seemed to awaken Marjo to the possibility that connections could be made with all her students. Some connections, it seemed, would take more time than others and surprise her when she least expected it.

During spring break, Marjo had the opportunity to volunteer at a school in an affluent community. She remembered that experience during a one to one conversation with me.

> It was very nice. She even had like a separate cupboard for parent volunteers. ... she gets a parent volunteer every single day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon and they are all moms. It was just interesting being in that environment seeing how many more resources they had, how many parent volunteers and it was just very interesting to be in a different school setting and her version was interesting too. I asked her, I said, "Do you have any advice for new teachers?" The first thing she said to me "If you come to an area like... parents will be on your case. You'll get some parent volunteers who think they can do your job better than you can.... But be careful because they can get you fired." I thought that was very different from our [practicum] school.... And she just said, "The first couple of years you're enthusiastic about teaching,

> and now, it's too, it's so much harder than when I started. So many more demands, it leaves you asking "Is this what it is all about?" She says she's burnt out.... She also was teaching thirty kids in her classroom, she also said she had an autistic child and I asked her if she had an aide and she said no, it falls in a gray area and she has five kids that go to resource.... I noticed too, when I came into the classroom, she didn't say anything and went straight to her desk. She looked kinda like she didn't want to be there. She was very nice to introduce me and stuff, but she looked kinda tired and I'm just saying it was reflected in the way she interacted with the kids.
>
> (Conversation 3/7/98)

Marjo appeared to have difficulty understanding how this teacher, who was working in such a "nice" school, could, after only six years, feel "burnt out"? It was hard to believe that there seemed to be just as many negotiations necessary in a school in a higher socioeconomic setting as the "inner-city" like school where she was assigned for practicum. On the surface, this resource-filled school seemed like a nice place to teach. Once Marjo began to hear the rest of the story, she realized there were just as many external pressures on teachers in schools in affluent areas as in a school in an impoverished context.

Marjo heard that teacher describe how difficult it was to keep a focus on trying to make spaces for all the children. She was trying to tell Marjo her story of external pressures that shaped her classroom life. This made Marjo think about the uncertainty of teaching and the complexities she might encounter in her future classroom.

Throughout the study I asked the question "What kind of teacher do you see yourself becoming?" Towards the end of the study this was how Marjo responded.

> I think I'm the same person, but I have to say I've learned an awful lot about myself besides teaching, and there were some things I liked and there were some things I would like to change definitely. I learned how I am in certain situations and I still think I need to work a lot on the teacher I would like to be, but realistically I don't think it will happen until after some years of experience. I guess to answer this question a little bit better, I kinda had pictures of how I would be and some of it was what I thought while others weren't really what I would be like and I don't think I will really know what kind of teacher I am going to be until I am actually teaching when I get a job.
>
> (Individual Response 1/17/98)

When Marjo came to say good-bye at the end of the semester in which the study took place, I was amazed at how comfortable I was speaking with her. Throughout the study I found our one on one conversations awkward. Sometimes I felt restricted. I frequently felt my words were measured when we spoke. This tension appeared to be a reaction on my part, to the "expert" role I often felt Marjo placed me in. As I would try to fulfill that role, I would inevitable say something about Marjo's practice that appeared to make her anxious and make her question my comments. These comments would then be followed by awkward apologies to each other.

Our last individual conversation was quite different. I shared with her how I was going to use the journal she had given me. I said I was going to make it my new common place book, a space I intended to fill with pictures and words of strong and beautiful women like herself and myself. As we spoke about that, I gave her a copy of Paley's (1989) White Teacher as I did all of the participants as a thank-you gesture. I also gave her a copy of Women's Ways of Knowing by Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule, (1986). I had shared pieces from this particular book with Marjo before and I felt that she responded favorably to the reading. But as I handed the book to her, for a moment we slipped back into the old pattern. She began to say, "Did I think she was the one who needed it most?" I began to apologize. This time, before the conversation became laborious, we both took a step back. We took a step back and remembered the earlier freer conversations we shared about the nature of the book. I believe Marjo then realized I was giving her this book because I cared about her as a young woman, student and friend. We spent the rest of our time reassuring each other that everything would work out for each of us and that this really was not good-bye.

From Individuals to the Conversation Group

The multiple storylines Jarod, Alyssha, Kacee and Marjo negotiated during the span of the inquiry centered around negotiating relationships with their cooperating teachers and their students. Negotiating relationships with their cooperating teachers seemed to shape their teaching identities the most. The four participants understood that their final evaluations from the two cooperating teachers they practiced under could "make or break" their chances at securing teaching positions after completing their teacher education program. As I came to better understand the Conversation Group as individuals negotiating difference in their lives, the next logical step would be understanding how they negotiated difference within the group context. In Chapter Five, I explore how the Conversation Group, as a group, negotiated difference and how evaluation continued to shape their learning to teach and understanding difference.

CHAPTER V

Negotiating Difference Together

The Conversation Group

In this chapter I explore how we negotiated difference within, between, and across our conversation group. As I thought about this undertaking, I was also interested in reexamining the constantly changing group dynamics. I wanted to explore how the participants felt they had changed. What caused them to act differently, talk differently or tell different stories? Each member negotiated difference in their own way. In my way of thinking their understanding of difference, and their practice did not change dramatically, but instead shifted subtlely several times during the period of the inquiry. Sometimes the shift was so subtle, it was not clear to me until I explored it with my advisor. It was not clear to me because I was absorbed in my own story of uncertainty as first-time researcher. I was constantly preoccupied with the notion that the inquiry was not evolving the way I thought it would. It was in our weekly conversations that my advisor helped me refocus my attention to the subtle shifts which were occurring. As an outsider, she was able to ask me questions that helped me reflect on what was really happening within the group. She helped me see how each participant was trying to make sense of their experience, how the group was making sense of the experience and how their actions demonstrated how much they cared for each other.

There were many barriers which seemed to limit the possibilities we could consider concerning the way each one of the participants negotiated difference. Some of these barriers were time, the building of trust, a feeling of being overwhelmed, and the ever present borders of the institutional story. The Conversation Group constantly struggled with the contradictions of what it meant to be a successful teacher in the eyes of the school, in the eyes of the university and in their own eyes. Being a successful teacher in the eyes of the university was, I believe, the dominant image because they felt they needed to receive high marks. Everything came down to having a superior GPA and a good student teacher final evaluation. Their image of a successful teacher was not theirs. Their image of a successful teacher appeared to be shaped by the university and the participating school.

Some questions I explore in this chapter are: Did the Conversation Group negotiate within the group that it was acceptable to be different? Did they come to recognize the uniqueness of how they thought about difference?

Coming To Recognize Difference Within The Group

Jarod was the participant who I came to know first. We started having conversations on a weekly basis when he was an undergraduate student in the science methods course I was teaching. Every time we came together to share stories, he reminded me of all the children considered different who I had taught in my classroom practice. He was, for me, all those children wrapped into one adult. When he came to my office to share stories, all of his stories gave me a sense that the stories were being told from the perspective of a frightened eight year old just placed in special education. My experiences with Jarod shaped the research in significant ways. One such way was my effort to help prepare him and the other participants for the first group session.

Trying to allay fears participants might have before the first organized group session, I asked each participant to come by my office a few days before the April 7, 1997 session. I wanted to assure them I would do everything possible to create a safe place to share their stories.

At the April 7, 1997 session, Jarod's fear of rejection seemed to be very close to the surface and it did not surprise me when he elected to go last to introduce himself during that first conversation.

> Jarod - I'm glad you guys went first, because now I'm going to change my format. (group laughter)
>
> (Group Conversation 4/7/97)

Although it had not surprised me when Jarod elected to go last, it did surprise me when he changed his format. We met a couple of days before the first group session and he seemed fairly confident about sharing his story in the same manner which he shared with me. Instead of hearing the frightened eight year old voice I had become accustomed to, I heard the voice of a young adult who believed that, as a result of being labeled, his life, up to seven years ago, was framed as living with a series of failures. Every new beginning held the promise of success and, before the story could continue, the promise of success was thwarted and the entire process labeled as a failure by him. From the time Jarod was placed in special education in third grade, he seemed constantly trying to negotiate his difference. Somehow after listening to how and what the other participants shared, he decided to change his format. Upon reflection, I realized Jarod seemed to always wonder which storyline was more comfortable according to the context he was in. The way he ultimately decided to share with the group came across as indecisive and unorganized. Before he was able to help us understand his story better, there was an interruption and finally we moved away from Jarod's story without allowing him to finish.

In our second conversation of the fall semester, the other participants remembered the picture Jarod painted of his school experience and each began their dialogue with an apology.

Marjo - I guess for my elementary school I enjoyed all of it. There wasn't any bad experiences. Sorry Jarod. (group laughter)

Kacee - I loved elementary school. I know (everyone looking at Jarod). We all apologize for loving elementary school. (group laughter)

Alyssha - ...I described the relationship between me and her as also one of friendship, because I had enough respect for her that I obeyed her as a teacher yet I admired her as my friend. Also another incredible thing she did was she paid for my grade two school pictures.... She did it all for me. She never once asked for the money.... I think the most important thing is because of all the things she did, she still didn't make me feel any less than the other students. She treated me with respect. She made learning really fun.

(Group Conversation 9/24/97)

Jarod's stories of his schooling experiences seemed to make Marjo, Kacee and Alyssha feel guilty and elicit apologies from them. They all had memories of a variety of school experiences, but Jarod's telling as one of a series of failures positioned him as the participant seen as different. A participant whose feelings needed to be considered since he did not share the happy experiences of sameness that Marjo, Kacee and Alyssha shared. I wonder now, whose difference were they apologizing for, his, or theirs? The group did not explore this difference, nor did I encourage an exploration. At the time, we only seemed to acknowledge it. In Chapter Six, I will speak to how I felt my inexperience as researcher limited conversation during crucial junctures such as this one.

Negotiating Us From Them

During our conversation on October 8,1997, the group described two related stories in which they negotiated difference as a group. The first, told by Jarod, reflected the taken for granted viewpoint shared by many teachers, many of whom are members of the mainstream about the selection of materials used in classroom projects. The second story was one in which they struggled to define the term inner-city. The first story, in Jarod's words, "had a dramatic impact" on him as it spotlighted the reality of the life that children sometimes lead.

Kacee - Jarod has a story you missed at lunch.

Jarod - I do? Oh, the hand thing. Sorry. We made an art project with the little plastic gloves you dye your hair with. So I handed out the plastic gloves and inserted tissue paper into the fingers. The teacher suggested popcorn for the body. I couldn't get any popcorn so I brought in puffed wheat. So, we made all this and some of it spilled on the floor, no big deal. But one girl in particular, she wanted, we were posting them on the wall, she wanted to take hers home. She wanted to take hers home and every once in a while I saw her on the ground eating the puffed wheat that came off the ground. So it really hit me, hard, she wanted to take it home, to eat the puffed wheat because she was hungry. And this particular project, they could make one turkey with puffed wheat and one body stuffed with tissue. Kacee said she talked to another teacher she's had interaction with, who stated they would not use a food product for an art project, because we are then assuming that food is, you know, food is like, you can dish it out like air. Whereas for these kids, food is a necessity of life. So, we're sorta being frivolous with something like that and to eliminate food products from your art.

Kacee - Unless it's total food, because then you make your art project,

> take a picture of it and then you eat it. And then you're still using the food as food.
>
> Jarod - And that's like your [referring to E.] cookie turkeys.
>
> Kacee - You can eat those, whereas with the puffed wheat, you can't eat the turkey without ruining the turkey.
>
> E. - A lady in the... section [science methods course] before yours called me on that very thing. I never had given it much thought.
>
> Jarod - See, I didn't think about it either. Then you, [Kacee] mentioned you wouldn't use food, these kids are looking at this as food. I saw them on the floor, eating yum, yum, eating, it had a dramatic impact on me, cause I didn't, the school we were at today had the essence of being an inner-city school, our school doesn't have that flavor of being an inner-city school.
>
> (Group Conversation 10/8/97)

Jarod's story was about what seemed to be an innocent art project to celebrate Thanksgiving. Like many art projects, one child wanted to take hers home early. That was what Jarod seemed to be thinking when the little girl asked if she could take hers home. It was not until he saw her picking up pieces of puffed wheat off the floor *and* eating them that the impact of what he was seeing, hit him. When he related the story to Kacee, she told him that she knew teachers who did not use food as art materials because it made it appear as if food was something that should be plentiful, so plentiful that it could be used for crafts not meant to be eaten. As the Conversation Group negotiated the difference between themselves and the lives that some children may lead, they seemed to become more aware of the need to be more thoughtful in their teaching practice.

As this part of the dialogue ended, Jarod related that the little girl's actions were surprising for another reason. Somehow he realized he thought his practicum school did not have children hungry enough to do what he saw the little girl do. The Conversation Group continued by further differentiating their practicum school from a *real* inner city school they visited earlier in the day. During their practicum experience, some of the student teacher seminars were held on different school campuses. It was directly after the student teacher seminar took place on a campus designated as "inner-city" that they had the following conversation. They seemed to have a picture in their heads about what constituted a *real* inner-city school and what the children there were like. They did not consider their practicum school a *real* inner-city school, although it was designated by the university as inner-city. In the following excerpt they continue the conversation.

> Kacee - I think because it's kinda half-half.
>
> Jarod - Like our classrooms, they're wall to wall, they're stuffed, colorful, pleasant to go into. Especially mine.
>
> Kacee - So was the school we went to.
>
> Jarod - The one in the basement was totally drab and I wouldn't learn well.
>
> Kacee - In the BD [behavior disorders] room?
>
> Kacee - Because it's distraction. Some kids don't work well. Colorful things or whatever. They can't because they're looking, ooh, it's color, gotta look up. So that they're focused on what they're doing.
>
> Jarod - No windows.
>
> Kacee - That could be the reason, maybe these kids have trouble focusing.

> Jarod - Could very well be. But as a teacher....Do you think the classrooms were fairly decorative enough?
>
> Kacee - I think they were fairly...like the rest of them...
>
> Jarod - See, like I think my school has already spoiled me. In a sense of a certain standard.
>
> Kacee - But if you think about it too, we are half inner-city, we were just talking about that with the problem of food or stuff, so at least you're getting that side. You're not looking at some high class school that you're going to. Imagine that, and then going to another school and then you'd be real shocked in your first year. That's the other reason I'm happy that I'm in a split class right now. If you did a normal class and then went into a split class, it would be crazy.
>
> (Group Conversation 10/8/97)

As I listened to the group struggle with trying to understand what "inner-city" meant to them, it seemed that they saw some kind of boundary between what they considered inner-city and what they did not. Inner-city seemed to be envisioned as a place where the facilities were drab and barren. Its children were poor, *really* poor, and hungry. I suspect now that they were established at their practicum school, that too, influenced the way they compared both schools. The practicum school was where they lived now, where they worked and learned. It was a school they had invested time and given of themselves. The children were no longer strangers. And even though they knew their practicum school was designated inner-city, they now had a connection with it. They did not have a connection with the inner-city school they visited. They had no connection with its children. They were others, outsiders looking in, judging the inner-city school by comparing it to their practicum school. This coupled with certain stories they had heard about inner-city schools seemed to shape their understanding of what inner-city meant.

Another boundary seemed to be how the participants remembered their own lives as school children compared to the lives of the students they were teaching. I believe they considered the children they were teaching very different from themselves. This boundary was even more pronounced as they compared their own childhood schooling with the children who were members of inner-city schools. They were definitely different from the inner-city school children. As always, time constraints moved us on to the next subject before we could reflect any more on the issue of what "inner-city" meant to them.

Negotiating Difference Among Selves as Teachers

The school where the four participants were assigned was a small school. That meant three of the four participants would student teach with some of the same cooperating teachers. It happened twice. Kacee and Marjo shared the same Division I teacher in alternate placements and Alyssha and Kacee shared a Division II teacher in alternate placements. In Chapter Four I wrote about Alyssha feeling overwhelmed with her work in the Division II class. When Kacee began her eight week placement with the same Division II teacher she struggled with the teacher's expectations as well. As the Conversation Group listened to Kacee talk about her experience, it was clear that there was a tension developing between student teacher, cooperating teacher and the Conversation Group.

> Kacee - Like I was saying, I'm totally not comfortable. I don't feel comfortable in her class. We had a little conversation yesterday, about me walking around the classroom while she's teaching. To me, that's

inappropriate. But she wants me to walk around to see where the kids are and stuff. I haven't been, she didn't mention it before and I totally, I guess, forgot, because to me, it's just not something you should do, is walk around while someone is talking. It's rude. She said, "I'm giving you this week and then you should be right in there." I'm thinking but I am! While they're doing textbook stuff or whatever, I'm walking around. That, I do....She is doing something totally different with me.

Alyssha - I'm wondering if somebody...hinted it was too much for me, so now instead of piling on the work, she's kinda expecting her [Kacee] to do a kinda different maneuver into being involved.

Jarod - Ask her.

Kacee - I did. She said, "If you've got too much work, we can cut back on that. I don't want you to feel like you've got too much work." I'm doing social and math. So I'm not doing too much work, it's just...I'm getting more comfortable teaching that class, but I don't feel comfortable in the classroom while she's teaching, because I don't know what to do....She's so specific and knows what she wants, so when she is in charge, I don't want to do something that is not her way.

Alyssha - That's the hardest thing for a student teacher I think, because you never know where you can go.

Jarod - How do these guys test you? Do they test you more because they're older? They have bigger attitudes and bigger bodies and all that stuff?

Kacee - I found her [Marjo's] class more testing than this class, but I think it's just the class, I don't think...I'm not having anybody run out on me. But like Victor swore at her, he hasn't done that to me yet, but I'm waiting.

Alyssha - I still miss him anyway.

(Group Conversation 10/29/97)

Kacee seemed to struggle with her cooperating teacher's expectations. The way her cooperating teacher wanted Kacee to conduct herself was contradictory to what she felt she should do. Kacee had her own image of what a good teacher was and her cooperating teacher had one that was in conflict with it. Kacee seemed to question the notion of adopting the cooperating teacher's image of a good teacher over her own. Doing what her cooperating teacher expected her to do, was in her words, "rude". The situation intensified when the cooperating teacher gave her a time limit to comply and suggested Kacee was not doing what she should have been doing since day one. Kacee responded to this suggestion with incredulity, because she thought she was already doing what the teacher wanted her to do. Kacee then made the statement that "she [cooperating teacher] was doing something totally different with me." This drawing attention to how the cooperating teacher seemed to treat Kacee differently from how she had treated Alyssha caused the group to wonder why this might be so. Although, there seemed to be an obvious pause, Alyssha was the only one who spoke to it. Alyssha suggested it might be as a result of her experience in the class. Someone might have spoken to the teacher about the amount of work expected during Alyssha's placement in that class. As a result this might have affected the way the cooperating teacher was now directing Kacee.

However, Kacee responded that she did not think too much work was not the issue. Not being comfortable walking around while the cooperating teacher was teaching was the problem. Kacee seemed apprehensive about the possibility of "doing something that is not her way." She felt the outsider in this classroom. Alyssha was quick to concur that she had also felt powerless in this class. They both seemed to have felt powerless while working in this classroom they could not claim as their own. Again, this difference was not explored. There was nothing said about how both felt the same powerlessness. I was silent, unsure of how to explore this difference without shaping it so that it became an issue of comparison between Kacee and Alyssha.

The conversation moved again to classroom management. Jarod wanted to know if the intensity of students' misbehavior was correlated with the size of the child. Kacee responded by remembering she was more uncomfortable with Eddie storied as the "runner" in her first four week placement than she now felt with older students. Kacee chose not to continue this train of thought and refocused the conversation around a child named Victor. This was the same boy that Alyssha struggled to make connections with when she was in the same Division II classroom. The conversation continued as Kacee spoke about the student designated as "adaptation".

> Kacee - Oh, he's a good kid. He's got brains. Every conversation I've led as a group, he has put up his hand and contributed brilliant things.
>
> Alyssha - Hmm. That's different.
>
> E. - But you probably got him started...and now Kacee...
>
> Kacee - Yeah.
>
> Alyssha - She [Alyssha's former teacher] would still point out to me everyday at how [in] the groups whom Victor wasn't working with, were working well.
>
> Kacee - We were doing groups, and I actually sat with Victor's group so they would get some work done. We've had some problems with Adam and Jay, but nothing big. But I think you also canceled that out. You

> started the basketball unit and I'm finishing the basketball unit. You know what I mean? He knows where the line is now.
>
> (Group Conversation 10/29/97)

Alyssha seemed skeptical when Kacee described how Victor was conducting himself in the Division II classroom. She seemed to question Victor's shifting behavior and the ease with which Kacee and he seemed to be working. It appeared to be important for Alyssha that she remind the group that her experience with Victor was quite different. Before they could explore this any further, I interrupted, possibly shaping and thus shortening the rest of that particular conversation.

As I remembered back to this session, I wondered what Alyssha and Kacee were thinking. I wondered if they thought the teacher was comparing the two of them. Why did the cooperating teacher seem not to expect Kacee to do the same workload as she had expected of Alyssha? Was it because the university facilitator had brought the cooperating teacher's attention to how Alyssha was exceeding the student teacher guidelines? Or was it a case of the cooperating teacher perceiving one student teacher as more prepared than the other? Was one student teacher's teaching style so different from that of the teacher that the cooperating teacher saw that difference as deficit? Was that in their minds? We do not really know what was in their minds but maybe this was one of the stories that played in their minds. If you are different from me, different from the mainstream, you are deficit. Were cooperating teachers' notions of what a good teacher was, creating a "star" of one of the participants in the inquiry? Individually, I think they got past this notion in their own sense making but maybe in the group it created tension, particularly if one member was storied as the "star". It may have caused other members to look at themselves and wonder if they saw themselves as same or different from that member. If they did, they may have felt in some way deficit. Comparisons of each other's practice in terms of better or worse than the "star" was a real concern. On the other hand, being storied as the "star", would have certainly created extra stress for that individual to live up to that story. Not only would that member have to try to live up to the already existing images of what a good teacher was, but now would have to live up to the image that the group may have had.

Re-imaginings

In a December conversation, Jarod told us a story of a little boy in his TMH

(Trainable Mentally Handicapped) placement who wanted to do activities differently from the rest of the class. As we tried to help Jarod re-imagine that story, the rest of the group and myself were more than a little enthusiastic, if not impatient, to help Jarod imagine different possibilities. In our zeal to help him, we positioned him so the only way he could respond was in a defensive manner. Jarod remembered this story telling and group response as profound. He remembered feeling singled out as different in how he chose to handle the situation with the little boy. The following is an excerpt from that conversation.

> E. - Okay, suppose in your own classroom you have a child like this? Are there some things you've already thought about that you might want to do that would be enrichment activities? He is rushing through some of this stuff because he clearly knows how to do it.
>
> Jarod- Well, I think the behavior that needs to be modified is, you stay with the group. A little bit.
>
> E.- Conformity? Conformity from you, Jarod?

Kacee - ...if you had someone in your class who wasn't a special needs child, would you view it the same way?

Jarod - I don't view him as special needs, he just can't speak. See, being fast, is the behavior, I don't know....

Kacee - But it's a good thing in our class. You get done, you get free time.

Jarod - But is it done to your specifications? If it is, fine, if it's not, it's wrong.

Kacee - Well, no, but you said he does the borders and then he colors over it because he's done....

Jarod - And he did that once and I realized my mistake at that point, so I won't do that again.... So when he's finished something, I take his crayon away.

Kacee- But then he's just sitting there, right?

Jarod- Well, maybe learning patience is a good thing.

E. - How old is he?

Jarod- Six, seven.

E. - That's kinda a hard thing to do for a six year old.

Jarod- Well, if Kenny finishes a month's worth of work in a week....

E. - ...then that work wasn't suited to his needs and that's why we're participating in this study and learning that some children learn differently from others and we need to find out what we can do to help them out....

Alyssha - What about the coloring activity and stuff like that? Is there an activity for these kids where they create it? Where there's none of these specifications, all these rules to follow? Like do they have activities that's just their work, their creativity?

Jarod - No.

> Alyssha - Do you ever find yourself like losing control or losing your temper because you're so frustrated because they can't do it or they won't follow the instructions you set out?
>
> Jarod - I guess not really, because I'm in a special ed. mind set. You have this ceiling and it's way up there.
>
> (Group Conversation 12/3/97)

When Jarod told this story, it seemed as if he were telling it from within the teacher as authority story he had lived out in his first four week placement. I wondered if he reassumed that storyline in order to cope with the frustration he felt when Kenny would not follow directions. I also wondered if the evaluation barrier was once again shaping his reaction. Jarod seemed to think that being a good teacher meant being able to keep all of his students working at the same rate. He seemed to struggle from being aware that children were different which required him to develop a more thoughtful practice, to "morphing", Jarod's science-fiction word for metamorphosis, (Clarification Conversation 10/98 regarding Group Conversation 12/3/97) into his cooperating teachers. This "morphing", as Jarod named it, was necessary in order to fare well on the final evaluation from his cooperating teachers. At the same time, I saw the rest of the group, including myself, create some tension as we tried to *help* Jarod see other possibilities. We suggested enrichment activities and activities that promoted the children's creativity. I suggested that perhaps the material was not suited to the child's ability. Perhaps adapting learning materials which were more suitable was a possibility. We questioned conformity and the enforcement of following directions. While some of our suggestions might have sounded prescriptive in nature, our hope was that Jarod would consider other possibilities when working with children who did not follow directions.

Trials, Tribulations and Coming Together

Marjo,Kacee, Jarod and Alyssha formed a very special relationship as a conversation group soon after the group's creation. They were extremely supportive of one another and found time to socialize outside of the school context. The bond they shared seemed as if nothing could break it. So much so, that during the period of the inquiry even when there were conversations that had tense moments, the overall feeling was that the four of them were in the same boat and it was comforting to know that they were not alone. As I reflect on those moments, I remember how uncomfortable Marjo seemed to be every time she shared how differently she was experiencing her first placement. I remember how tension was created when we wondered why Alyssha's first placement teacher expected different things from Kacee. I remember how uncomfortable Jarod seemed when he realized how differently he was approaching children who would not follow directions from the rest of the group and his somber reaction afterwards. I remember how anxious I was that their practicum period was coming to an end as would our bimonthly sessions. I wondered if some of the intense connection the Conversation Group appeared to have up to that point would be lost over the holiday break. It would be difficult once again trying to negotiate everyone's schedule to meet even once a month. Alyssha was moving 600 miles away, Jarod was thinking of increasing his hours where he worked, Marjo and Kacee were busy finishing their last semester of course work.

We met once more after the conversation on Dec. 12, 1997 for an end of the practicum, pre-Christmas celebration at Alyssha's parent's home. During that informal get together, with no tape recorder, we planned to set up tentative dates, exchange addresses and phone numbers and watch the video of *The*

English Patient. I looked forward to spending some down time with the group before we said good-bye for the holidays. I was sure that any tensions which had occurred during the practicum period would be put to rest as we came together in this social context. That was my picture of what I thought would happen. When I arrived, I found Alyssha, Jarod, Kacee and Marjo in various stages of celebration recovery. They had celebrated together at a local pub the night before. Marjo and Kacee had spent the night afterwards with Alyssha. In fact, Marjo was not feeling well and said she would not be able to stay for the movie but would stay just a few minutes longer. So far, this was not the way I envisioned this get together. When Alyssha stepped out of the room, Kacee and Marjo shared with Jarod that the mood was a little tense when they returned to Alyssha's home in the early hours of the morning. Old fashioned parents wondered why it was necessary to stay out so late? They seemed to wonder if these actions were appropriate for a young lady who was engaged and whose fiancee was unable to escort her on this celebration. Jarod was visibly upset to find out that as a result of inviting other male friends, his actions had caused tensions to rise between Alyssha and her parents. Jarod was so troubled, he wondered if he should apologize to Alyssha's parents. He wanted to make sure the blame lay with him. Kacee and Marjo tried to assure him that it was not as bad as he imagined. When Alyssha came back into the room, she seemed embarrassed going over the details with Jarod, but wanted to assure him that it was not his fault. What I remember Jarod saying was that the reason he invited one of his friends to come along was so the group could have a designated driver. He had only the group's safety in mind. As I watched this conversation unfold, I knew my apprehension about the group losing their connection was unfounded. The very strong connection they developed as the Conversation

Group was obviously something they valued and, for now, it seemed the magic continued.

It was January and the new semester was under way. I looked forward to our first session after the practicum period. It was scheduled for January 24,1997. Throughout the inquiry period we assembled at Kacee's apartment and Alyssha's home. For this session, Marjo volunteered her apartment and I accepted on behalf of the group. Everyone was notified by e-mail or phone. In my phone conversation with Alyssha, we discovered that she would not be able to meet with the group the following month in February.

During the inquiry period, we met only once without all four members. The kinship generally present during our conversation sessions was definitely absent. The absence of one member, in my eyes, had changed the group dynamics radically. So much so, I decided if one of the members was unable to meet with the group, we would not schedule a group session. Meeting as a group in February appeared problematic, so I decided I could meet with each participant individually that month. That being the case, Alyssha and I made plans to meet about an hour before the group session. We scheduled an individual session at my office for 10:00 in the morning. After our meeting we planned to ride the LRT to Marjo's apartment and meet everyone there. What actually happened that day was something everyone would remember. At 12:00 noon, all members of the Conversation Group present and accounted for, I documented the series of events, the series of misreadings leading up to the group session on January 24,1997.

> E.-We are at Marjo's apartment today. This is a change from our regular meeting place which is Kacee's apartment. To complicate things, Alyssha and I arranged to have a one on one session an hour before we were to

meet at Marjo's. The group session was scheduled for 11:00. We don't meet until after 12:00, over an hour late.

E. - Before we actually get started, let's go back through the chain of events of this morning. I have to have it on tape. (group laughter) Who started it?

Alyssha - First of all, I'm supposed to meet her at 10:00. So I get to an LRT [light rail transit] station at 9:20.

E.- Actually, you have to start with yesterday.

Alyssha - That's right. I was supposed to arrive [in the city] yesterday at a decent hour to talk to all of you, no problem. I got called in to sub [teach], so I had to take the night bus, I got here at 5:30 this morning.

Kacee - You see, that all makes sense now, because I didn't know why you didn't phone last night, and I thought it would be rude to phone your house, because you were getting together with your family.

Alyssha - No, I was not there! So this morning I get to the LRT station in plenty of time, but it's not running on the north end, which I did not know.

Group - Oh yeah, today is the day [scheduled construction]....

Alyssha - So I had to take some bus to the next station and then take the LRT to her office. Meanwhile, my new best friend [referring to Jarod], you must have called my mom and she said, "She's gone to the university." You said, "That's not where the meeting is!" And so she said, "You can probably catch her at the next station." Right? (group laughter) So Jarod dashes off to that station, parks his car, runs up stairs, waiting, waiting, waiting.

Kacee - How long did you wait there? You must have waited there a long time.

Jarod - An hour and fifteen minutes.

E.- And it sounds like you must have just missed her.

Jarod - I think she was on the train that was pulling out. I called Marjo back a second time, so it's her fault that I missed the train. (group laughter)

Marjo - Jarod called me just before he left, 9:30, then around 11:00.

E. - How did Kacee get involved?

Marjo - Jarod called Kacee and we told each other in case you hear from Alyssha....

Jarod - To see if you guys [referring to Marjo] had made plans. That way if you guys had made plans, then I know, okay.

Kacee - Like that's why she was at the university, to meet me. We should have phoned E., that would have been nice. She might have known. (group laughter)

Marjo - Kacee wasn't going to leave until she found out where she [Alyssha] was.

Kacee - That's why I waited until I got a call saying you were here. We're all going to get beepers and cellular phones.

Kacee - You [Marjo] must have phoned me the second I left to go check your [E.'s] office. I was gone for ten minutes max.

Jarod - The funny thing is the LRT pulled in and I talked to a guy cause it's all running on the north bound tracks, as it comes from the station and back to the university. It came every three minutes so I'm standing up on top of the escalator directing people, that's the south bound train...(group laughter) The first conductor came and asked me, "Excuse me, sir. This is the south bound train." And I said, "Yes, I know. I'm waiting for somebody." Then the whole transit did the circuit because there's five trains between him and he eventually comes back and he was the last guy I talked to. "Are you still here?" (group laughter) "You know, there's a brunette down at the other end at university, maybe that's her." Then I called her [Marjo] at quarter to and then at 11:00.

E. - No one thought about calling me? (group laughter)

(Group Conversation 1/24/97)

As each member told their version of what transpired, I was impressed that it was told by each one with laughter. There were no signs of irritation or blame. There was nothing to suggest that the Conversation Group was experiencing disharmony. After the trials and tribulations experienced in their practica, that day was a day of coming together, across their differences. Even though Jarod, Kacee and Marjo had their own way of working through the mystery of the missing Alyssha, the series of events which unfolded exemplified the caring notion they had for one another. They were all trying to be in the right place to get Alyssha to the right location. They kept misreading each other, partly I believe, because they did not anticipate the kind of care for each other they were all clearly demonstrating. It was an extraordinary process to witness.

Honoring Each Others' Differences

A question the Conversation Group asked as a group and individually was, how did I come about choosing them as participants? Each time they asked, my answer was basically the same. That was why I found their response so interesting the last time they asked me that same question. My answer on January 24, 1997 was that I believed they were representative of the elementary education students I taught at the university. In other words, I initially, believed they were a very common cross section of students. This time their response was in unison and loud as they all laughed and replied, "We thought you chose us because we were so different!" (Group Conversation 1/24/97) This would have been a wonderful time to talk about what they perceived as "different", but we quickly moved on to the next issue at hand, mainly because the session started over an hour late that day and we were running out of time.

As we came to know each other, we came to understand we were all very different. We saw Marjo experience an awakening in her understanding of difference and watched her travel across unfamiliar worlds. We saw Alyssha trust the group to make the inquiry process an educative one. We watched her begin to overcome years of shyness and become more aware of her voice, both literally and figuratively. We saw Jarod shift, morph, and shift again to new possibilities. We watched him negotiate a more positive course in his struggle to achieve what he saw as success. We began to see Kacee in a new way, more than "table mommy." She found the group a safe place where she could begin to tell more of her teacher story which seemed so filled with contradictions. The Conversation Group saw me struggle as a first time researcher. With evaluation so pervasive in their thoughts, and wanting to help me be a "good" researcher, they constantly asked if they could contribute more. They watched me question my own practice and think about how I could develop a more thoughtful one with my future students.

Revisiting the Conversation Group

It was a wonderful experience watching Alyssha, Jarod, Kacee and Marjo negotiate difference within, between and across the group. I watched with amazement at the constantly shifting group dynamics. I watched the Conversation Group move from an orientation-like state to a very cohesive state of being. At the beginning of this inquiry, the Conversation Group wanted to know basic organizational information. They wanted to know what the rules were, how and what could they possibly contribute and how was it all going to work out? We met informally the following semester in September before the practicum phase of the inquiry. By the end of the second meeting, I watched four individuals consolidate their differences, their expectations, their anxieties and unify into the Conversation Group. From that day on, their bond seemed to grow exponentially. This cohesive state was demonstrated in their commitment to the inquiry and, to each other. However, this harmony would from time to time be interrupted by tensions tied to the institutional story. The Conversation Group did not compete openly against each other as they might have in the university setting, but their practice did seem to be colored by the ever present evaluation barrier. It also happened when they started questioning who they were in the group. They never actually negotiated this within the group which in itself caused an underlying tension. I firmly believe they did not want to disrupt the camaraderie of the group and chose not to negotiate some tensions. By the end of the study each member of the group tentatively began to confront their own issues that would eventually help them understand themselves better. They had been together as a group for almost a year and seemed ready to explore contradictions which came about as the inquiry period unfolded. Each member seemed to know that the other members of the group would support them in whatever way they could. Just as this state of interdependence began to develop, our time together came to an end. I believe a major portion of what kept the group bonded was proximity, daily, weekly, monthly contact. Time, once again became the barrier to overcome. A barrier, I feared, that even the Conversation Group would not be able to successfully negotiate. After the last group session in March, 1998, I became the group's communication link, passing words from one group member to another. Our time together as a group, understanding difference as we composed teaching lives across multiple contexts, was over.

As I began to revisit the members of the Conversation Group to inform them that they soon would be receiving hard copies of our work together, nostalgic memories filled our conversations. As we shared new stories of new worries of the present, I got the feeling that we secretly wished we were all back at Kacee's apartment. Kacee offering us drinks, Marjo and Jarod adjusting the tape recorder, Alyssha quietly thinking about her forthcoming wedding and all of us eating pizza and Kindersurprises, together again.

CHAPTER VI

Looking Back, Looking Forward: Conversations, Images and Spaces

> To tap into imagination is to become able to break with what is supposedly fixed and finished, objectively and independently real. It is to see beyond what the imaginer has called normal or 'common-sensible' and to carve out new orders in experience. Doing so, a person may become freed to glimpse what might be, to form notions of what should be and what is not yet. And the same person may, at the same time, remain in touch with what presumably is.
>
> (Greene,1995, p. 19)

I came to the University of Alberta three and a half years ago and enrolled in the doctoral program. Soon after, wonders began to emerge as a result of my course work. These wonders were centered around my years of classroom teaching experience across multiple school landscapes working with children of many dissimilar backgrounds. Dilemmas I had faced as I attempted to imagine alternative possibilities for their schooling experiences, constantly returned to me in conversations as I shared my memories with other researchers and with undergraduate students I taught in my science methods courses. I also began to share the differences I was negotiating as I struggled with the transition from one graduate program to another, one country to another and from one way of life to another.

In Chapters One and Two I wrote about how I came to to understand the ways in which my narrative history shaped my teaching practice. I began to see that an integral thread woven into the story I was composing of myself as a teacher was linked to difference. In Chapters Three, Four and Five I wrote about how situating my study as a narrative inquiry created opportunities for me to explore my own and others' experiences of difference. As I read the work of researchers who were also attempting to understand experience narratively (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; 1990; Clandinin & Connelly, 1994; 1995), I imagined possibilities for how my inquiry might unfold. Narrative inquiry seemed, to me, a way to approach inquiry where those I worked with and myself, might "become freed to glimpse what might be, to form notions of what should be and what is not yet" (Greene, 1995, p. 19).

In this final chapter, I look back to the inquiry I have been engaged with over the past year and a half, while also looking forward, still engaged with imagining alternative possibilities for the future educational experiences of children who are not like us, and of my future work as a teacher educator and researcher. One of the most significant insights I gained from this work, contradictory to my original assumption, is that there are "no answers," only more questions, wonders, and more possibilities for future imaginings.

My Story As Researcher: Looking Back

Nearly three years ago as I wrote my research proposal and planned out possibilities for this inquiry, I believed I had carefully orchestrated every aspect of the study so that everyone involved in the inquiry would benefit. I designed a study I believed would help preservice teachers think about difference in the classroom. I chose my participants carefully and created a safe place where we came together in conversation. In order for the participants to encounter multiple forms of difference, I asked that they be placed as a cohort on the same elementary school landscape, a school placement designated by the university as "inner-city". Despite these orchestrations, the study did not develop the depth of understanding I had wished for. I was full of hope that Alyssha, Jarod, Kacee and Marjo would make connections between their own stories and those of the children they came to know. I wanted the four participants to connect with one another's experiences. I wanted these connections to "...bridge differences and create similarities" (Conle, 1996, p. 305). I hoped they would define difference in a broader sense. It seemed the children they identified as not like them were typically children who were seen as ill-behaved. I wanted the Conversation Group to understand that those undesirable behaviors were sometimes childrens' reactions to others' limited understanding of difference. I hoped they would question their cooperating teachers' practices and try to understand what shaped their practices. I hoped they would integrate more of the activities they learned and practiced in their education courses. I was full of hope that the Conversation Group would understand that by making learning relevant and interesting, they might shape the way children experienced school, thus reshaping undesirable behavior. I wanted all of us to understand how each of our life stories shaped our teaching practice. I hoped our conversations would be centered around children of difference and how their coming to understand children, shaped their practice.

These hopes might have materialized had the study not come as a last consideration in their hectic lives. The two hour conversation sessions seemed to drain us all, even though we only seemed to scratch the surface of topics linked with difference. Had we been able to reflect continuously on conversations we shared, connecting each week's conversation with the next, I wonder if we might have sustained more meaningful conversations.

My inexperience as a researcher seemed to compound the situation in that I offered little response along the way and seemed uncertain about how to help each of us make connections during the critical junctures as they emerged. We rarely made connections between our own personal narratives and those of the children. I soon came to the realization that, having never participated in any other formal research, my inexperience hampered my ability to shape our conversations so they were of a more reflective nature. I became so engrossed listening to the participants' stories that I seemed paralyzed. I wanted to listen to every single word. I did not want to live these conversations in a state of readiness to interject responses at the "perfect" junctures. Bateson's (1994) words speak to me as I wonder how common it is for novice researchers to react in much the same manner as novice teachers. She writes:

> I cannot know which observation will pose a theme that proves key to understanding, narrowing in attention to a pattern that opens out to many others. It is common to gather data in fieldwork and continue to mine that data years later to illuminate questions still unposed when the original material was collected. (p. 11-12)

Even now as I reread and "mine" the data, I see new junctures I was unable to see at the time.

I also believe that my paralyzing silence occurred because I was in the middle of questioning my own practice; as highlighted in Chapter One, I was trying to make sense of my image of a good teacher, that I once believed in. This image had been shaped by the school landscapes on which I first taught. I believed good teachers enacted school policies without question. I looked to the district for direction because I believed they knew what was best for teachers and children. I remained silent because I did not want to offer prescriptive remedies which I learned as a beginning teacher and used for many years. Most of all, I did not want to appear uncertain. After all, I was the confident veteran elementary school teacher with all the answers and I thought they believed that I could easily reassure them in their moments of uncertainty.

Reynolds' (1992) words resonate with the image of novice researcher I often imagined myself as:

> To the beginning teacher, everything seems important and worthy of comment. Beginning teachers may have difficulty zeroing in on what is instructionally important for reflection because they have not developed schemata for organizing the enormous quantities of information gathered during classroom experiences, or it may be that the questions used to elicit reflective answers are inappropriate. (p. 25)

Reynolds' words describe how I saw myself as researcher and some of the obstacles that led to my silence. I think my silence not only came from being uncertain of what to say, but also of being uncertain that what I might say might influence their responses. When I did respond, my response seemed to shape the rest of the conversation. I wanted to hear what the Conversation Group had to say, not what they thought I wanted to hear. For example, in Chapter Five, I wrote about my attempt to make Alyssha feel better and how I inadvertently made a statement that then shaped how Kacee responded. I often wondered if my comments may have made Kacee feel that I was favoring Alyssha over her. My response came at a place in our conversation when the dialogue seemed to be developing a tension because Kacee and Alyssha held differing perspectives of one of the students. Instead of helping them explore this tension, I was afraid it would create a rift in the kinship they constantly demonstrated. I interceded and, what might have been the beginning of deeper reflection, was prematurely ended. This was my experience with the group as far as my responses were concerned and I believe that is why I preferred to be silent.

I also found it difficult to capture the junctures, to respond when opportunities presented themselves, and to ask questions which would elicit reflective answers. Thus I was unable to ask questions like, "What are we saying about difference in this story? Do we mean different from you or different from me?" As our conversations unfolded, I did not pursue moments that occurred when the question of "Who am I as teacher?" arose. Instead, these moments passed, we moved on to another story, ever mindful of the time frame bordering our conversations.

In weekly conversations with my advisor, she often asked me: "What role do you see yourself playing in the study?" I struggled constantly with a response to her question. Over time, this question developed into a tension because I vacillated from wanting to be accepted by the Conversation Group as one of its members, to knowing my teacher educator responsibility was to ensure they were in an educative situation. My inner tension, hindered my ability to help my participants make sense of what was happening to them.

My own story of completing my doctoral program and looking for my first position in a university setting also seemed to parallel the negotiation I saw the group trying to manage. As they were struggling with their student teacher/teacher identity, I was struggling with my doctoral student/professor identity. Just like them, I was busy trying to make sense of my own situation through their experiences. I saw myself in Kacee, because I, too, have always projected an image of confidence, yet have seldom if ever felt as confident as the image. I saw mirror images of myself in Marjo, unsure if I would be able to meet the expectations and demands of negotiating a new story as a full time professor. I saw myself in Jarod, torn between differences that I too constantly negotiate. I often interpret my difference as deficit and, at the same time, use my difference to my own advantage. I saw myself in Alyssha, afraid of voicing my thoughts, afraid that doing so would not command attention and, at the same time, excited about the possibility of that same voice making a difference in my new position. I was just as uncertain about my future as Alyssha, Jarod, Kacee and Marjo. However, I found comfort when I was in the group's presence. Their supportive nature was there for me when I needed it, just as they had been there for each other.

Learning With Each Other in the Conversation Group: Looking Back

Midway through the inquiry period I asked Marjo, Alyssha, Jarod and Kacee to respond to the question of how they believed they benefited from participating in the study. Their responses seemed to reflect that they appreciated the other group member's differences. For example, it appeared that Marjo believed that four different perspectives on the same problem was better than one. Alyssha said she appreciated that, by being different, each member gave, and was able to receive, constructive comments about each others' practice without making any member feel like his/her practice was being judged. Jarod, who seemed to have always struggled with his difference, found that, during the practicum phase, he was not as different from the others as he had once imagined. He did not feel as alone in his difference when he was sharing with the group. Kacee seemed to find comfort in the group's differences as well. As she came to know each member individually, she was able to establish a trusting relationship which allowed her to explore some of the tensions she was experiencing.

Through these responses, it was clear that the group appreciated each other's differences. However, I still wondered if they saw their own differences as valuable? For example, Marjo was a sensitive, compassionate soul who always seemed to seek out the best in everyone and in every situation. She always wanted to hear both sides of the story. Alyssha seemed to establish personal relationships with relative ease. She also had a way of meeting obstacles dead on, working hard to find a solution. Jarod had a naivete about him that seemed to compel others to reach out to him. He had an uncanny knack for what he called "morphing" into the kind of teacher he thought others needed to see him as. What Jarod was trying to imply using his science fiction vocabulary was that, according to the context in which he found himself, this chameleon-like ability helped him transform from a complaisant good humored fellow to an in-your-face enforcer of rules and conformity. Kacee appeared to have leadership qualities that came naturally. Her organizational skills and supportive nature helped create the initial cohesiveness of the group. However, I do not remember that the Conversation Group ever spoke explicitly about their own differences or each others' differences in each other's presence.

The following thoughts are their words transcribed from the Conversation Group's individual audio taped responses. In Chapter Two, I explained that the tremendous amount of energy necessary in negotiating their complex lives prompted me to ask the participants if they would respond to a monthly question on tape. The following excerpts are responses to the question of how they thought being members of the Conversation Group had been of benefit. The excerpts I chose reflect the value they saw in each other's differences.

Marjo saw her involvement within the group as an educative one. She saw the other group members' differences as valuable sources of information. At the very least they offered her three different perspectives that might help her do things "better."

> By working with the three of them...I've learned different ideas, that's the most important one, because all of us are so different. Each of us has a different viewpoint on things or different experiences so obviously that's going to help... see a different point of view and...how to deal with situations differently or better...I do feel that we get along quite well.... (Individual Response 10/29/97)

Alyssha seemed to think that because the group formed such an intimate community, differences could be capitalized on and shared and that they could all learn from each other. Alyssha appreciated the supportive nature of the group and was relieved that the group did not function as separate individuals competing for the class GPA as had commonly been their experience.

> I also think an advantage is because we are so close we can also look at our differences, because the four of us are very different people and I think we can take that and grow from that. Because each of us might approach a different situation or problem differently and yet all of us can I learn from that and we can apply that to our own classrooms. (Individual Response 10/29/97)

When the Conversation Group started meeting once a week at the beginning of their practicum period, Alyssha appeared quiet, pensive. At first I did not know what to make of her silence. I worried that she was not comfortable enough to share her thoughts with the rest of the group. She even commented, once, that it was a couple of pages into a transcript before her name appeared for the first time on a page. Later, I came to understand that she was quiet at the beginning of each session because she was reflecting, speculating about the topic of discussion and how that pertained to her situation in the classroom.

Given that understanding, her responses were, therefore, quite focused.

Jarod's response was recorded after the group conversation on October 29,1997. In this portion of the excerpt, he is responding to the surprising way in which that evening's conversation unfolded. Our focus within this conversation had been around their having finished their first week of transition from their four week placement into their eight week placement.

> The thing that surprised me was that everybody was in the same boat. Even Kacee and Alyssha...because my perception of them [Kacee and Alyssha] is that they were very successful at what they were doing and I thought especially Kacee was going to have an easy transition...and to hear them say they were having these problems and the adjustment was so much different and difficult for them because...I was not expecting them to have stories of drastic change and readjustment and intense self doubt.
>
> (Individual Response 10/29/97)

Jarod, who negotiated his difference on a daily basis, came to understand that he had been different his whole life. As a result, he felt he had been treated differently. He expected to be treated differently even though he fought against it. When he started as a participant in the study, it seemed as though he felt the others might be more successful than he was because they had, what he saw, as a "normal" school experience. Jarod was relieved and, at the same time, amazed when Alyssha, Kacee and Marjo reiterated apprehensions similar to his as they entered a new classroom. He was surprised that the others, whom he saw as successful, were also experiencing anxieties. He recognized that they were filled with self doubt just as he was and they were more like him than he had first imagined. He seemed to come away from this conversation realizing that, maybe, he was not so different after all.

Kacee's response seemed to reflect her appreciation of being able to work and learn with three other people she had come to trust. Composing a life far away from her home, being a member of the Conversation Group meant she was not alone during her practicum experience.

> I think that it would be very difficult for me because I find friendships very hard to build. Don't find getting along with people very hard, but I find building a friendship that I trust, to talk to somebody honestly about something, is very difficult to do. I think because we have the four of us and we talk about our problems and our happiness, and things like that, that makes me more trusting....
>
> (Individual Response 10/29/97)

Perhaps our inquiry space, and the people in it, helped Kacee begin to explore the tension she was feeling about teaching. Although we did not really let her explore this tension in the group setting, the feeling of being around people she trusted may have allowed her to begin to explore her tension.

As I revisited the thoughts shared by each of the participants, I was reminded of Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule's (1986) work on different ways of knowing. "Constructed knowing" was echoed in each of their responses. Marjo, Alyssha, Kacee, and Jarod spoke of how they were aware of each other's perspectives. Trying to understand learning to teach through this positioning had been beneficial. There also seemed to be reflections on their feelings of care for each other, a quality addressed by Belenky, Bond, and Weinstock (1997) when they write: "listening to and hearing another person in his or her own terms has particularly deep ethical overtones for connected knowers ...understanding engenders caring" (p. 61-62). Noddings (1984) describes this kind of caring:

> Caring involves stepping out of one's own personal frame of reference into the other's. When we care, we consider the other's point of view, his objective needs, and what he expects of us. Our attention, our mental engrossment is on the cared-for, not on ourselves. (p. 24)

As I listened to their words, I hoped they would continue to build on their present experience and carry aspects of their coming to understand difference between themselves and others in their future lives.

As a teacher educator and a researcher I continue to wonder about those experiences in our lives where we might come to see our own differences as valuable. If, as Connelly and Clandinin (in press) understand, teacher identity is constructed and reconstructed through multiple, shifting experiences, negotiating and learning to value our differences, is a quality with which we will continuously be engaged. And yet, when I reflect upon the narratives I have told earlier in this dissertation, both of myself and of my four participants, the spaces where we might engage in this necessary sense making of our experience --of our selves-- seem to be narrowing. It seems to me that our most hopeful images for the future of our profession are those which might build upon creating the kinds of inquiry space I initially imagined for our Conversation Group-- space of "speak[ing] with others as passionately and eloquently as we can;...look[ing] into each other's eyes and urg[ing] each other on to new beginnings" (Greene, 1995, p. 43).

Shifting Qualities of the Conversation Group: Looking Back

As the Conversation Group spent more time with each other, they became an extremely supportive group. At the beginning of their practicum phase, the group started out sharing, giving each other answers framed as "try this"..."try that". Some examples of this quality occurred during our September 24, 1997 conversation when the group shared suggestions for including children from differing religious backgrounds into classroom activities. In that same conversation, we also provided Kacee with suggestions for what she might do so that all the children felt comfortable as she read a story. At our October 3, 1997 conversation, the group shared ideas for different ways they could use their lesson plan sheets.

Response.

The tone of the conversations, however, seemed to change when they moved to new classroom settings. It was a highly stressful time for each of them. One significant change I noted was that 'response' appeared to play less of a role in our conversations. Other researchers helped me to reflect on how I saw the change in response within the Conversation Group. They suggested that it may have been the result of the group becoming more reflective about what the others were storying, meaning that, while the qualities of attentiveness and caring were certainly still present, the group seemed less vocal during our later conversations, less sure of giving quick-fix solutions. Another possibility for this shift within our conversations could have been a case of more individual sharing, now that they were more comfortable with each other. This allowed less time for response to one another's storytelling. Or was it the ever-present time constraints, coupled with those of evaluation, that hampered the response, the retelling? Was that why we found it hard to respond, help retell, imagine other possibilities to some of our stories?

These wonders about response led me to Tarule's (1996) thoughts on how the knowledge we shape in conversation with others is a "shifting and unstable process" (p. 286). As I read Ellsworth (1997 referencing Donald, 1991), I thought further about conversation and response. Ellsworth writes:

> the unspoken and unspeakable space of difference between two participants in dialogue.... The gaps between self and other, inside and outside, that dialogue supposedly bridges, smooths, alleviates, and ultimately crosses, are scenes troubled by cognitive uncertainty, forbidden thoughts, unreliable and unstable perceptions. (p. 42)

Rereading the word "supposedly" in Ellsworth's thoughts, I reflected on the shift in response within and across our conversations. I began to wonder about the taken-for-grantedness I brought to my understanding of conversation. Uncertainty, in the stories they told of their practicum experience and as they wondered about possibilities for helping one another, was a recurring thread in our conversations.

Thinking about conversations in this way, I began to see there were many shifts in our understandings of difference within our conversations. Although these shifts were not dramatic "aha" moments, they were subtly there. We needed more time to explore these shifts but, again, the evaluation and time constraints seemed to allow nothing more than a "what's happening right now" point of view to exist. I struggled to realize the subtle shifts in our understandings of difference and, therefore, struggled to help the group understand the subtle shifts they were making in understanding difference. I wondered if this struggle came as a result of my years of thinking of difference in a very narrow context. When I thought of difference and, I suspect, when my participants thought of difference, we most often thought of obvious, glaring differences. By this I mean, religious, cultural, racial and gender differences.

This on-the-surface perspective of difference often overshadows the hidden, less visible, subtle differences that are also so important -- differences such as socioeconomic differences, differences in power and positioning in classrooms and other social contexts. It is something I still struggle to understand and something I hoped the Conversation Group could have explored with me in our journey of understanding difference.

Images of "Good" Teacher.

The members of the Conversation Group seemed to be constantly negotiating four sets of images of what a good teacher was. One image was the university's image of a good teacher. A good teacher's foundation was strengthened by absorbing information the "experts" at the university dispensed and then regurgitating it at the "expert's" will. Teacher education students learning to be good teachers did not question their "training." Good evaluations shaped what teacher education students learned in their course work. A good teacher was an undergraduate student completing their program with a high GPA.

Another competing image was the participating school's image. This image centered around their primary evaluator, the cooperating teacher, and that teacher's image of a good teacher. A good student teacher was one who demonstrated good classroom management, gave directions in a commanding voice and a person who contributed in a variety of ways to the betterment of the school.

The third image was their own image of what a good teacher was. The third image, the most important one in my eyes, was left out, silenced. Alyssha, Jarod, Kacee and Marjo allowed a glimpse of what each of their images of good teachers were only at the beginning of the study. Alyssha imagined a shy quiet teacher making a difference in her students' lives as her teachers had for her. Her image was one in which she could develop close relationships with all of her children. Marjo's image of a good teacher was one who made connections with the children she was teaching by listening to them, a person who the children felt safe with, a person like she saw herself to be. Jarod's image was the opposite of how he remembered his teachers treating him. He did not want to be the controller, the squasher of young spirits. He wanted to be the teacher to whom a small frightened child placed in special education could go for help and understanding. Kacee did not want to "force things down kids' throats that they [didn't] like" (Group Conversation 4/7/97). Her image of a good teacher included someone who engaged children in hands-on activities and made learning relevant. These were the silenced images as the practicum phase of the study began. They were not discussed because the study constantly competed with the university and cooperating teacher story of practicum. There was little time because the Conversation Group was busy being what they thought their cooperative teachers wanted. Each member's "make it" or "break it" evaluation was at stake.

The fourth image was the Conversation Group's image of a good teacher. This image seemed to be shaped by my presence in the group conversations. As their former instructor I was the one they seemed to form this fourth image of a good teacher around. The story of certainty being perpetuated at university played a central role in shaping our exploration and experimentation of our teaching practices in our conversation group. Engaging in the kind of exploration I imagined around our teaching practices necessitated uncertainty. According to the plot lines of the story of certainty shaping their university experience, Alyssha, Jarod, Kacee and Alyssha learned that a "good" teacher could not afford to appear uncertain. What I was just learning to understand twenty years after I began to teach and what I wanted the group to come to understand was "to live in ambiguity...[is] a life that requires constant learning" (Bateson, 1994, p. 13). This "constant learning" seemed to be yet another unexplored tension in our conversation space. It shifted from a tension to a conflict because the group was so absorbed in the belief that they must perform well, in the eyes of their cooperating teachers, the university, themselves, and now, within the Conversation Group.

This fourth image of a good teacher, a teacher who lived a life of constant learning, was not their own. This fourth image was mine. My constant attempt to negotiate a position within the group as group member seemed not to succeed. They never allowed me to position myself in any role other than that of instructor; not so much as "expert," but as someone they trusted and believed would help them become a good teacher. As a veteran teacher with years of [what they must have seen as] successful experience in the classroom, I was yet another model they compared their image of "good teacher" to. This constant pressure to live up to what I, and therefore the Conversation Group, saw as a good teacher seemed, in a paradoxical way, to not allow them to step back or to realize that teaching is tentative, shifting, uncertain rather than certain.

Another concern that we spoke about, albeit superficially, was how their storyline of what they hoped to accomplish in the classroom, their image of a good teacher in their practicum classrooms had shifted, and in some cases, changed dramatically. It was hard for me to watch them "shift from the progressive liberal orientation...to a more conservative, traditional and authoritarian orientation..." (Tardif, 1985, p. 146) toward the end of their practicum. I believe this shift happened as a result of the evaluative aspect of their practicum. They entered the participating school hoping that they would shape the curriculum so all students could be successful. Before long, however, they seemed to learn that barriers prevented them from their desire to "challenge the status quo" (Britzman, 1986, p. 454), and to move away from perpetuating this cycle. It seemed the Conversation Group saw themselves caught in a cycle where, as a result of living up to university and cooperating teacher expectations, they felt compelled to perpetuate an unquestioned status quo cycle. By perpetuating this status quo story, they placed themselves in a position of authority and expected the children they were responsible for to conform to the way they were expected to teach. Jarod's struggle around enforcing conformity for his children in the TMH setting, which I wrote about in Chapter Five, is illustrative.

The story of Kenny, the child who in Jarod's eyes refused to follow directions, was an example of how this cycle of conformity permeated the Conversation Group's teaching practice. Remembering Kenny's story of wanting to be independent, I am drawn to Bateson's (1994) words about superiority. She wrote: "The basic challenge we face today in an interdependent world is to disconnect the notion of difference from the notion of superiority..." (p. 233). In Chapter Four Jarod discovered that he had connected the notion of superiority to the notion of difference. He described how he had a feeling of "walk[ing] around in the shoes of superiority and put[ting] himself on a pedestal" (Individual Response 1/6/98) when he realized that the children in his TMH setting were as alert and clever as the "regular" children in his other placement. Although it frequently appeared as though no "aha" moments were realized, temporary and subtle shifts were occurring. Further reading, conversations with other researcher and continual reflection on the transcripts of our conversations, brought me to an increased attentiveness of these subtleties.

After their practicum phase, Kacee and Marjo returned to the university. They became busy trying to do what they had to in order to get good marks in their last few courses. No spaces were created within these contexts to *just talk* about what these preservice teachers' images of a good teacher were or to let them figure out possibilities on their own. Jarod decided he needed a break from school. This relaxation period did not include a space for thinking about his image of a good teacher. Alyssha, who completed her B.Ed at the end of her practicum in December, was busy filling out applications for employment and rehearsing answers that would help her secure a teaching position. She, as well, felt compelled to live out the stories of good teacher surrounding her. In her work with a teacher moving from preservice to inservice, Craig (1995) makes a similar point about this need for the beginning teacher she worked with to deny *her* image of good teaching and tell, instead, stories highlighting the district's image of a good teacher. She wrote, "Benita learned she needed different expressions of good teaching in hiring situations before she would be hired" (p. 86).

As I reflect upon our conversations as part of teacher education, I realize that within the context of our inquiry, each one of us were constantly caught up in these conflicting storylines. I wanted to work with what my participants thought their image of a good teacher of children of difference was. That is why I created a space where they might feel free to explore that concept, but they never seemed able to break free of the barriers that the other three images perpetuated.

What We Did Learn Around Difference

We did, however, learn things about difference. All the participants experienced difference working with their cooperating teachers. One of Alyssha's cooperating teachers expected her to be a full time teacher and gave her constant response while her second placement cooperating teacher allowed days to pass before she gave Alyssha any response on her teaching. Jarod experienced an even greater difference between the two teaching styles of his cooperating teachers. Jarod's first teacher taught in what Jarod saw as a very traditional way. He named her style "professional". His second cooperating teacher's style was very fluid, integrated. Jarod could not see the structure he saw in his first placement. This fluidity was seen as different and one in which he might not use the teaching skills he had learned during his first placement. By the end of this placement, however, he saw this fluidity as freedom to enjoy teaching the curriculum.

Kacee found her first cooperating teacher's practice chaotic and inconsistent. She seemed disappointed that her first placement teacher did not give her control of the class. At the beginning of her second placement, Kacee found it difficult to make connections with her cooperating teacher. However, she believed they eventually developed a strong relationship, one in which Kacee felt the teacher trusted her with her children.

Marjo's first exposure to difference was not with her children as we all expected, but, surprisingly, with her first placement cooperating teacher. She felt unwelcomed and disrespected. Marjo's cooperating teacher was often referred to as being diametrically opposed to her image of what a good teacher should be. The teaching style of her second placement cooperating teacher left Marjo feeling unprepared to teach at the end of the practicum. Marjo was concerned after encountering children whose undesirable behavior shaped her own practice. She was also concerned that her cooperating teacher had not modeled a style that was consistent in diffusing some of these situations. Marjo struggled with these inconsistencies in this placement.

I watched Alyssha, Jarod, Kacee and Marjo move from students in university classrooms where they role played how to teach lessons, to their anxious anticipation of their impending practicum. They seemed uncertain, anxious and nervous, because they were worried about how they would come to know their students as first, in a student teacher role, and then, in a teacher role. Tardif (1985) uses the analogy of students experiencing student teaching much like first time drivers. She writes:

> Like the first time driver, attention became so focused on the act of driving they were unable to relax and think of the journey. They were unable to relate to what was happening around them. They were consumed by what was happening to "me." (p. 142)

As our conversations about difference continued, I asked the group to imagine what their teaching practice in the future might look like. Their responses were usually minimal, hesitant and, if responded to at all, they responded with "I won't know until I am in my own classroom." One of the times Kacee gave this kind of response came as a result of the tension she was feeling as she conformed to her cooperating teachers' expectations. Kacee seemed apprehensive about the possibility of "doing something that is not her way" (Group Conversation 10/29/97). Kacee wanted her teaching to be student centered. However, she felt the time constraints and the lack of conversation between herself and her cooperating teacher kept her from making any changes to the established routines. In Chapter Four Jarod said, "Now it is completely up to me to take everything I've learned...and make it 100% mine. Prove to myself, I guess that's what that first year will be" (Conversation 2/98). Marjo made the same kind of statement in Chapter Four: "I don't think I will really know what kind of teacher I am going to be until I am actually teaching when I get a job" (Individual Response 1/17/98). Alyssha's statement seemed to reflect a different tone. As she thought about beginning teaching and her own classroom, she said, "[It is] all encompassing and overwhelming. I find myself breathing new air, yet struggling for the next breath while determination wills me to survive" (Reflection Fragment 9/18/97).

Teacher Education : Looking Back

As I designed my study, I began by drawing upon the work of Gomez (1996). Her words helped me think about what I wanted my four participants to think about as they prepared to be future teachers. She reminded me that Grumet (1988) and Delpit (1988) used such phrases as "other people's children and the "culture of power" to awaken us to how, as teachers, we must be responsible to and respectful of children who are not ours and that we must be aware of how mainstream culture shapes our practice. Gomez helped me understand that preservice teachers learn to live cover stories in the competitive atmosphere of the university. She describes that, when a safe space is allowed, they can step away from those cover stories and share stories of what is really happening in their learning to teach experience. Gomez invited her students to write and share stories personally important to them in an effort to better understand who they are. I chose to incorporate this element in my study of difference for several reasons. First, I believed by understanding who we are, we can help others understand themselves. Second, through understanding themselves, participants could understand how their narrative histories might shape their practice. Third, by sharing teaching stories within the context of a supportive group, strengths could be built on and weaknesses could be explored. Gomez helped me understand what I wanted to accomplish in the study.

Living Alternative Stories as Researchers and Teacher Educators.

I am left wondering: How can teacher educators situate themselves within research conversations so that we become more reflective? Conle (1996) helps me think about this when she describes a process she names as "resonance". She writes:

> I observed a process where, through experiential storytelling, preservice teachers connected specific items in current or past experience to a narrative of their own or someone else's experience. In this process, they subconsciously created metaphorical correspondences between two sets of narrativized experiences. I called this process *resonance* and found its educational usefulness maximized when preservice teachers shared their narrative inquiries and stayed close to concrete experiential contexts. (p. 297)

Conle explains that, during these conversations, tacit knowledge, implicit in the experiential stories' contents, was carried forward and put next to other stories in new contexts. I now realize that this is what I wanted and hoped would happen within the Conversation Group. Yet, as I have written earlier, while each of us shared experiential stories, the other members' participation seemed limited to listening politely and responding with reassuring comments.

I only remember a few rare moments in which "our thinking...provid[ed] connections in pools of experiential knowledge" (Conle, 1996, p. 303). The closest the Conversation Group came to making these kinds of connections were as we talked about our elementary schooling. It is interesting to me now as I re-read these sections of the transcripts as I see that it appears to be the tremendous differences between our experiences that created barriers to our making connections between them. A concern the group seemed to share, and which might have restricted an extended conversation around our early schooling, was Jarod's experience which was predominantly negative.

Another time we lived through this experiential process came as they became more comfortable describing their cooperating teachers' teaching styles. That connection was, however, still weak. As I storied my own experiences at this place in my career, I described my practicum experience as non-eventful. Alyssha, Jarod, Kacee and Marjo were all experiencing difference working with each of their cooperating teachers but the only connections they made to these experiences were negative ones. What a depth in understanding we might have experienced if we had overcome the fears that constrained our storytelling, fears of exploring stories that we or others had classified as negative. Narrative resonance may then have become a much stronger quality within our inquiry space. We might also have expanded Conle's process of resonance to include differences as well as correspondences. If nothing else, it seems to me that the dissonance created through an exploration of our difference, may have offered important openings potentially leading to retelling some of the stories we told. Reflections on these qualities and their shaping influence on our inquiry space, carry invaluable insights for our work with future preservice teacher as well. For example, in my new position in Texas, I will be teaching courses in language arts and social studies. A focus on both the resonance and the dissonance these preservice teachers and I experience around these "curriculums as plans" will enable all of us to expand our thinking around different interpretations of these documents and ways they might become meaningfully enacted in elementary classroom contexts.

Due to a lack of a space in which to negotiate stories of themselves as uncertain, what instead seem to happen was that Alyssha, Jarod, Kacee and Marjo told stories, listened to one another, and responded to topics they felt safe to talk about. Topics such as adopting the cooperating teacher's teaching style were talked about superficially. This happened even in the safety of the supportive group which they had created. We were, perhaps, engaging in what Noddings (1994) calls confirmation.

Noddings reflects on the necessary role confirmation plays in nurturing classrooms and schools where we might "meet the other morally" (p. 4). She writes about the intrusive nature of evaluation in the relationships between teachers and children: "This is a dilemma that goes to the heart of teaching. Teaching involves two persons in a special relationship....The essence is in the relationship" (p. 195). In Chapter Four, I wrote about how Kacee experienced the tension between herself and her cooperating teacher as she tried to make sense of her storyline as the authority in the classroom. She felt she had to follow and enforce her cooperating teacher's rules because "conforming to established practice" (MacKinnon, 1989 p. 12) became necessary as Kacee felt that she was being evaluated by her cooperating teacher at all times.

The Conversation Group moved out of the known university setting into the unknown classroom setting. This transition from student to teacher was like moving from one country to another, one culture to another (Conle, 1996, p. 305). The school culture Alyssha, Jarod, Kacee and Marjo were negotiating stories of themselves within, brings to mind Anzaldua's (1987) words: "Culture forms our beliefs. We perceive the version of reality that it communicates. Dominant paradigms, predefined concepts that exist as unquestionable, unchallengeable, are transmitted to us through the culture. Culture is made by those in power..." (p. 16). The Conversation Group saw their cooperating teachers as the ones in power. As mentioned in Chapter Five, the cooperating teachers had the power to make or break their practicum evaluation component. For this reason, Alyssha, Jarod, Kacee and Marjo were reluctant to make any changes in established routines and instead lived a story of maintaining the status quo. In some cases they seemed to be living this story out of concern for the children, but, more often than not, their response seemed to come as a result of the practical reality that they needed a good evaluation so that their future employers might see them as successful teachers. However, as they seemed to be constantly negotiating the need to conform to university and participating schools' expectations, the Conversation Group did not explore this issue.

The university did not seem to promote a need for students to come to know each other across their differences. If the university encouraged this notion and provided a space for conversation, perhaps some long established barriers could be weakened. In Chapter Four, Alyssha described her experience as an undergraduate in course work at the university. These spaces were shaped with a competitive element and were not experienced as a place for collaborative learning. Alyssha did, however, feel the space the Conversation Group provided was a place where she trusted the other members enough to share her stories and was experienced as a collaborative space. I believe Alyssha, Jarod, Kacee and Marjo would have experienced their course work as more relevant if they had experienced their university classrooms as spaces where collaboration was valued and encouraged.

Another quality related to teacher education which I believe shaped our inquiry space, was that our work in our study came last. Because I could not affect their GPA, or directly affect the way their cooperating teachers worked with them, the study seemed to carry the least amount of significance in the lives Alyssha, Jarod, Kacee and Marjo were composing. I am not saying they saw the study as *less* important. The Conversation Group came willingly into the study, not sure why they were invited, but certainly intent on helping me, out of a real concern on their part, to understand difference. The energy and time needed to retell, reflect and restory their images of difference, however, came last due to the many contextual factors shaping their experiences. The four images of good teaching I spoke of earlier, as well as their part-time jobs and the rest of their lives kept them extremely busy. Even though they were committed to our shared work, their multiple commitments kept getting in the way. Our study became, in a sense, extracurricular. I created a space which was not available in the regular program to explore their images of good teachers, but, even then, we were not able to explore them. They could not let go of what they needed to do in order to be what they considered "successful" long enough to wonder about their own evolving images.

Future Possibilities for My Story As Researcher: Looking Forward

My future as a teacher educator and researcher will be one in which I will continue to imagine alternative possibilities for the educational experiences of children who are not like us, and for the teachers who will be teaching them. I imagine future research will continue to be shaped by conversations, images, and spaces. In that respect, Conle (1996) caused me to think about how I might shape my future attempts to create more reflective conversations. She writes:

> If, in teacher education, we create public spaces for this kind of narrative work in addition to more traditional activities based on discussion and argument-- we may have a greater chance for more holistic teacher development, touching emotions and tacit practical knowledge as well as explicit ideas and beliefs. (p. 321)

As I watched the Conversation Group negotiate the traumatic experiences their practicum held for them, I was continuously struck by the pervasive lack of spaces for them to name and explore their uncertainties. Although I created a safe space in the hope that my participants would be able to imagine new possibilities on their own, I learned it must also be a place where inquiry is encouraged. At the same time it must not be one to the extreme of critique and abstraction. Negotiating a balance between the two, safety and inquiry creating a middle space, will be challenging. Nevertheless, these spaces are important within the structure of practicum. As part of the practicum, students would not have to "make time" in their busy lives but instead time would be built in. A safe place for inquiry where they might be encouraged to reach out to one another would be available. In universities where competition shapes the way undergraduate students interact with one another, this new time and space I imagine would be experienced by them as a welcomed change. Student teacher practica and seminars might then become spaces where students might explore issues other than "...how you hand write a Q!" (Group Conversation 9/24/97). Perhaps such spaces should be created before practicum. Better yet, changing practicum from a stress-filled situation to a space where cooperating teachers and student teachers work collaboratively would, I believe, encourage reflective conversation around difference. Because we all were negotiating time, space, and evaluative boundaries, major milestones may not have occurred in our inquiry, but, it was certainly a step in the right direction for all of us.

As we negotiated various boundaries throughout the inquiry, I learned I need to broaden my definition of difference on the school landscape. I need to move beyond the isolated child who was seen as different to include the interactions associated with children storied in this way. Until I became fully engaged in this inquiry, my focus was clearly centered on children only. Now, I realize that I must include everyone who works with children of difference and how their understanding of difference shapes that child's schooling. Including the differences these preservice teachers encountered working with their cooperating teachers was an important contribution to my understanding of difference.

In future research, I would like to reexamine the evaluative component of the practicum. Redefining the practicum into a time of constant learning, ambiguity and uncertainty from the certainty, the "make it or break it" definition that now shapes most practica, might take some of the pressure off both student teachers and teachers. Shifting the practicum from a time of evaluation of certainty would certainly limit the hierarchical positioning of the cooperating teacher in relation to the student teacher. I wonder, then, if this altered positioning would encourage a more collaborative relationship in which cooperating teachers are seen as supportive and more equal, much like the one lived out by a student teacher who participated in the alternative program, an experimental program allowing her to participate in a sustained teaching experience over an eight-month period (Clandinin, Davies, Hogan, and Kennard, 1993). Benita, the student teacher, compared the collaborative relationship which included her cooperating teacher as being "supportive" and likened this support to a "backbone". Davies, (1993) writes: "To be more equal is to live a new story of teacher education, a competing story in sharp contrast with the sacred theory-practice story in which hierarchical relationships are defined and understood" (p. 57).

In a chance encounter in a university hallway, I listened to a former student of color tell me a story, first of her practicum and then, a story of her beginning teaching experience. In that conversation I learned that people who live on the margins are more awake to where they are positioned than people who live in the mainstream.

As I imagine future research and think about this conversation in the hallway, I would like to continue my work with preservice teachers and learning about difference. I wonder, if I invite students who see themselves as living life on the margins into the inquiry, if their participation might start the conversation around difference instead of the participants waiting for me to guide them through a conversation. Students living on the margins may help white mainstream students who are asleep to the issue of difference, experience awakenings that might not otherwise occur if those storied as different are left out of the conversation.

A tension surfaced during the inquiry which I now realize I must make a greater effort to understand. I learned that my ongoing negotiation of difference within my own life shapes my ability to help others understand difference. I continuously negotiate this difference throughout my life, across multiple personal and professional landscapes. Although I have not been victim to marginalization to the extent of many others who are not mainstream, I have experienced marginalization; therefore, this tension comes to the surface time and time again. I have, on numerous occasions, tried to **resolve** this tension. One way I tried to negotiate my differences was by doing what Rodriguez (1982) did. He knew that, in order to succeed, he would have to give up his Mexican identity and learn how to assimilate into the white society of power. However, this assimilation solution did not work for me because I never truly identified with my Mexican heritage. I had no ethnic identity to lose. I am reminded of Bank's (1994) description of this complication when he writes "ethnic identity becomes complicated for individuals of color for whom ethnic identity is not significant (p. 4). Ethnicity was not what my primary identity was all about. What complicated my struggle with difference was that I was not sure what my primary identity was. The more I tried to label it racial or social standing, or anything else, I only found it messier to separate the conflicting images surrounding me. I tried to resolve social differences by forming alliances with the "right" people, whether it was as a seventh grader, a university student, a classroom teacher or university instructor. I tried to dress appropriately, be a member of the right organizations, become an efficient name dropper and ensure everyone knew how well traveled I was. Another way I tried to resolve this tension was to allow my professional life to dictate how to negotiate my differences. I was a good teacher in the eyes of the district, a promoter of district policy and a model for my children as they encouraged me to be. As I continued to negotiate my difference in a way that made sense, I still believed myself to be an outsider and, more often than not, it was a result of others reading my visible qualities, my skin color.

I will continue to explore this tension as I plan future research. There must be other researchers and teacher educators with parallel stories of trying to come to an understanding of who we, as visible minorities, are and how we position ourselves, and are positioned, within mainstream society. This process shapes the teaching of preservice teachers. That teaching, in turn, shapes the way preservice teachers teach children who are not like them. Therefore, it is important that I come to a better understanding of the multiple threads shaping my identity. Inquiring into these complexities with other teacher educators of visible difference who struggle with similar identity issues, will help me shape my future teaching so children who are different benefit the most.

Glimpses Into the Future From Our Conversation Group: Looking Forward

During our last group conversation, I was thinking aloud, wondering where we might all be in five years. Since this was a tentative year in my life,I included myself. I began by saying we would all have been enjoying our new positions for a couple of years. Kacee, Marjo, Alyssha, and Jarod responded in curious laughter. They proceeded to take turns sharing glimpses into the future...

Kacee voiced what she said she considered was her real dream which was to run an educational camp facility.

> Well, there's always my dream which is to own my own campground. A summer educational camp. I can see myself as the camp director. I loved when I was the assistant camp director and I taught the staff. I loved that. (Group Conversation 3/7/98)

As Kacee spoke about her dream, her image of a good teacher came across. The campground context seemed to be a space where she imagined she would not encounter the dilemma of forcing anything down children's throats. It was a space where evaluation would not shape the activities she chose to use. It was not a space where the competitive story overwhelmed the collaborative one and where camp counselors would not feel compared one to another. Teaching in this context seemed to be imagined as a space for new possibilities.

Marjo continued with her vision of what the future held for her.

> I see myself veering off in two different directions. I've often thought about doing social work. I see myself starting off in the classroom, but I can't see myself doing it for twenty years, let's put it that way. It could be totally different but I think as I start off I'll branch off into something else. I don't know what, yet.
>
> (Group Conversation 3/7/98)

Marjo voiced an uncertainty about a life long career teaching in the elementary classroom. It seemed, even though she felt driven to live up to the image of a good teacher created by the university, her hard work was of little consequence when she entered her practicum placement -- the real world of teaching. She was disappointed that, after spending years living up to the images of good teaching created by others, she still felt inadequately prepared to be a good teacher. At the end of our inquiry she still felt her experience thus far had not helped her to become the teacher she imagined she *should* be.

Alyssha took her turn and gave us insight into the direction she wanted to pursue.

> I thought about the fact of teaching high school eventually but I also thought about going into administration. I'd love to be a principal.
>
> (Group Conversation 3/7/98)

Alyssha responded that she was doing what she wanted to do and was comfortable with it. She considered other options, directly connected to the classroom. I thought about the story Alyssha shared of her first year in grade school in Canada and being labeled as a "slow, retarded child." Not only had she shifted this early image placed on her, but she had been successful in school and had lived up to the university's image of a good teacher. Unlike the beginning of her educational journey, she was now considered successful in the eyes of the school. She felt ready to enter the teaching world and took her first steps into it by beginning substitute teaching in January immediately following the completion of her program.

Jarod was the last member of the Conversation Group to share a glimpse of what he saw in his future.

> That's very interesting. When I see myself as retiring as an elementary school teacher, I can't see it. Like for twenty years, or so, I kinda wonder what's going to happen in the next ten or fifteen years down the line. I have no idea what that will be.
>
> (Group Conversation 3/7/98)

Jarod's journey through the necessary upgrading to enter university to becoming a beginning teacher was experienced by him as a monumental challenge successfully accomplished. He overcame academic, social and self imposed images. While his transformative ability enabled him to have a relatively successful practicum, it did not allow him to examine his own image of what a good teacher is. Jarod's constant negotiation with his own difference, in and out of the group context, seemed to limit this exploration as well. His glimpse into the future seemed to reflect unresolved tensions.

I spoke about my future as well. I wanted to continue teaching undergraduate teacher education students. Teaching as a graduate student was a rewarding experience. I wanted to pass along some of the new understandings of difference I learned from working with Alyssha, Jarod, Kacee and Marjo. I wanted to help my future teacher education students acknowledge difference and be more aware of how their understanding of difference might shape their practice. Questioning the university image of good teaching had come late in my classroom practice. I was *trained* by the best teachers at the school I was assigned during my practicum. Their image of a good teacher was my image for many years. It took several years of shifting before I began, ever so tentatively, to live out my own image of a good teacher.

Teacher Education: Looking Forward

If preservice teachers are to make sense of their practice, space needs to be built into existing teacher education programs; space for preservice teachers to make sense of teaching, teaching difference and their image of "what a good teacher is". These spaces would enable preservice and beginning teachers to explore different issues encountered in teaching. In a review focused on the issue of what does it mean to be a competent beginning teacher, (Reynolds, 1992, p. 10) describes the findings of Paine (1989) in which he writes about how beginning teachers may see students differently from experienced teachers. Paine (1989) described four perspectives which build one on the other. These four perspectives of difference, in order, are:

> *individual differences*, which are psychological and biological difference; *categorical differences*, which group students according to gender, social class, race...without attention to the social construction of the category; *contextual differences*, which take into consideration the social constructed causes of difference; and *pedagogical perspectives*, which recognize the pedagogical implications of student diversity. (p. 20)

Teachers tended to:

> see student differences as decontextualized, which makes them unsure of how to concretize the abstract notions of fairness and equality in teaching. Thus, they suggest teaching methods that treat diversity as a problem, not as a phenomenon... (Paine, 1989, p. 20).

My point then, is, how long does it take beginning teachers to get to this point if there are no spaces provided during their preservice years? Will they find that space, or will they stop thinking about it? Will they go without a space for so long that they stop thinking about it? Worse, is there a time that it is too late, when they stop thinking about it and continue being defined by their colleagues, principals, and the local district?

I am encouraged that there is a growing emphasis on changing the status quo. I hope more school-university partnerships will be developed like the one reported by Johnston, Duvernoy, McGill and Will (1996). They wrote about the importance of conversation in the school-university partnership with which they were involved.

> We talked as often as we could-on the phone, in classrooms, in the hall, in grocery stores, and sometimes at the college...Talking seems such a simple thing, but it is not given much institutional support. It is the talking, however, that gave rise to our collaboration. (p. 173)

One of the emphases, in this elementary certification program, was the relationship between teaching and learning. The program encouraged interaction between teachers and student teachers. The emphasis moved away from a prescriptive "how-to-teach" to one of attending to each group of students being taught at the time: "Our students are encouraged to see not only themselves as learners but to see all teachers as learners" (p. 175). In talking about how they developed an informal collaboration between cooperating teachers and student teachers, the researchers emphasized that conversation was important to their work.

> This seems a simple thing to do; it is not. While school/university partnerships are being developed as part of educational reform nationwide, universities and colleges do not often reward the supervisor who spends time in the field talking to teachers. Public schools do not provide time for this kind of work either. It would be useful if both institutions recognized and supported the time it takes to build professional communities (p. 177).

Teacher education programs like this one and the alternative program which Clandinin, Davies, Hogan and Kennard (1993) participated in, seem to be thoughtful ways to educate preservice teachers. Such programs allow preservice teachers to learn *alongside* cooperating reachers. In this type of setting a space can be created that will help preservice teachers come to their own conclusions about what they think makes a good teacher.

Preservice teachers need a space in which they can enter into conversation about how their knowledge as teacher does not exist separately from their embodied knowing. Their personal practical knowledge (Clandinin, 1985,1986; Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) develops within each of the landscapes in which they have lived. These conversational spaces could provide the response necessary for preservice teachers to break away from the notion that learning, especially institutional based learning, is fixed and linear. Within the spaces I am envisioning, I imagine openings where "personal practical knowledge is viewed as tentative, subject to change and transient, rather than something fixed, objective and unchanging" (Clandinin, 1986, p.

19).

One of my hopes in this inquiry was that the participants would come to understand that their images, their personal practical knowledge, would shape their teaching practice. I hoped that once they became aware of what these images were and how they were formed, continued reflection would help them make sense of their learning to teach difference. Being attentive to Clandinin's (1986) words helped me to begin to understand how my narrative history, my personal practical knowledge, are intertwined. She writes:

> Images, as components of personal practical knowledge, are the coalescence of a person's personal private and professional experience. Image is a way of organizing and reorganizing past experience, both in reflection and as the image finds expression in practice and as a perspective from which new experience is taken. (p. 166)

Preservice teachers need spaces to engage in conversation and, with guidance and response, can find a place to practice their new understandings of teaching difference in the classroom. Professional development schools (PDS) are organizations in which preservice teachers might find greater relevance and integration of theory and classroom practice. A professional development school is a complex organization formed between the research-based university system and the public school system. Clark (1997) describes a PDS as, "... one institution in which teachers, administrators, university students, and university professors collaborate in a process of continuous, mutual and often spontaneous adaptation" (p. 1). A PDS is most often created as a result of the university and the public school realizing that working together across once separate entities, can achieve much more than working at a distance from one another.

The benefits of being based, on an elementary school campus and learning how to negotiate their teaching lives on school landscapes far outweighs any of the problems students might find troublesome. My image of students working on PDS campuses reminds me of the Conversation Group and how as a cohort they developed an extremely strong support network. Moving beyond individual support, PDS campuses provide a supportive network of teachers and professors, each working with the other and with the preservice teachers. As with any organization, each PDS is different. Guidance could be offered so that preservice teachers could choose which would best fit their needs. These collaborative organizations seem to be one place preservice teachers might find that all important space needed to engage in continuous conversation about issues important to them.

I have addressed my concerns about preservice teachers understanding their personal practical knowledge, needing a safe space to have conversations, some of the few available alternative programs such as the PDS program, and how once there is a space to have meaningful conversations, teacher educators should find ways to shape those conversations so they are more reflective in nature. I now want to explore who the students might be who are participating in these conversation spaces.

Throughout the six chapters of this dissertation I have continuously pointed out that the fact that most teachers teaching in our elementary schools are white, mainstream women is troublesome. As a result, most preservice teachers bring a mainstream, dominant mode of thinking about difference as they enter the schools they are placed in for practicum. The schools they enter into are more often than not, diversely populated. As cohorts of students come together in conversation, especially about difference, it is important to understand their long established views of people who are different from them. Drawing on Sleeter's (1995) research, helps me to better understand how most preservice teachers continue to overlook, oversimplify, overdo the meaning of "culture." She writes:

> most [students] have so little knowledge of the culture of any group other than the one into which they were born and into which schools have been inducting them since kindergarten...that they simply do not realize the complexity and degree of sophistication of any other group. (p. 24)

Sleeter believes that community based field experiences are essential in teacher education, especially in the education of White teachers. When she taught courses at the university, students only seemed to have an intellectual understanding of what differences in culture meant. After her students spent time in another community setting dominated by a culture different from their own, they were able to begin to confront their own misconceptions of that particular culture or cultures. This seems like such a logical step in coming to know others within and across differences that I wonder why it is not done more often. Placing preservice teachers in settings where they are unfamiliar may give the students a beginning sense of what children who are different experience.

Community-based field experiences supervised in thoughtful ways might encourage preservice teachers to reach out and make connections with their student's families. Once these kinds of connections are made, the shock of "world travelling" experienced by students like Marjo might make the adjustment to new cultures less difficult. Jarod may have viewed the inner-city school they visited during a seminar in a different way. Alyssha may have been able to make those parallel connections sooner. Kacee's apprehension of teaching full time may have been made easier as she came to know the community around the school better. This might have encouraged Kacee to try out the same notion in her home province.

Community-based field experiences seem to be a positive way to educate teacher education students. In this way, they come to know the community and its children. It is important that preservice teachers realize that "the structures, cultures, and pedagogies practiced in schools (and rarely challenged or disrupted by university research and teaching) work to exacerbate the inequalities in the rest of our society..."
(Oakes, 1996, p. 4). By coming to know the kind of lives children lead, preservice teachers might reconsider the notions that racially diverse, limited-English proficient students, are labeled with a variety of names indicating that they are less able to achieve than their white counterparts. Perhaps preservice teachers can see the value of the knowledge these children bring with them. Being familiar with the community in which these children live might help future teacher education students find more relevant ways of teaching curriculum that does not take difference into consideration.

Making connections with children who are not like us and creating a caring classroom environment may help preservice and beginning teachers understand Greene's (1993) words concerning diversity and inclusion. She writes:

> My interest in coping with diversity and striving toward significant inclusion derives to a large degree from an awareness of the savagery, the brutal marginalizations, the structured silences, the imposed invisibility so preset all around. (p. 211)

Once preservice teachers have a better understanding of the lives their students and their families live, the possibilities for engaging in career-long thoughtful practice seems more likely. Their practice will not involve marginalization as in Jarod's childhood school memories or as Marjo experienced in her first placement, in which she believed both she and the children in that classroom were targets of marginalization. These manifestations of marginalization might have less of a foothold with preservice and beginning teachers if the university and elementary schools were to provide spaces for conversations in which issues such as these could be explored in safety. Greene's (1993) words bring forth, for me, how passionately I want my teacher education students to feel about difference. She writes:

> I can only say once more that situations have to be deliberately created in order for students to break free in this way. Coming together in their pluralities and their differences, they may finally articulate how they are choosing themselves and what the projects are by means of which they can identity themselves. We all need to recognize each other in our striving, our becoming, our inventing of the possible. And, yes, it is a question of acting in the light of a vision of what might be - a vision that enables people to perceive the voids, take heed of the violations, and move (if they can) to repair. (p. 219-220)

Any teacher education program which will offer a space in which preservice teachers can freely wonder about difference in these ways has the potential for shaping teachers that today's schools need. I am reminded of Elbaz's (1992) thoughts:

> Teaching trains us to pay attention to difference, to see each pupil as one member of a larger group, so that while recognizing all the variability in attitudes, abilities, experience, disposition, and need that is present in the

> group, we remember that as teachers we must act, and we are bound to act in a way that meets difference with fairness and justice. (p. 427)

Today's schools need teachers whose moral concern is part of their practice. Teachers like Alyssha and Marjo whose practices are based on moral notions might find teaching more rewarding if the personal relationships they develop with children were valued.

What I worry about the most when I think about Alyssha, Jarod, Kacee and Marjo being beginning teachers in places that seem not to provide spaces for conversation is that after they expend all of their energy trying to finally be the teachers they want to be, they may encounter "moral tiredness" as they face "knowing what [they] think is important is not valued by those around...[them]" (Clandinin,1995, p. 4). I worry that they may have difficulty negotiating their desire to do what is best for the children in their care while also being accountable to their employer. I fear they may revert to the actions I saw them taking during their practicum experience; taking the path of least resistance, conforming to the status quo. Clandinin's (1995) thoughts on moral tiredness keep coming back to me as I think about the possible future the Conversation Group might encounter. She writes:

> Crossing back and forth between two such different places and trying to be morally accountable to the children in our classrooms even as we try to fit within the morally oriented knowledge funneled into the landscape outside our classrooms is difficult...living with these moral dilemmas makes you feel morally tired, and that is a tiredness that is very hard to live with. (p. 5)

Marjo's influence on me begs me to end this section with something positive. I chose Noddings (1986) words to describe my ultimate hope for the

Conversation Group, myself, and the institutions we are all working within and across.

> It is this striving for the best in ourselves and in those with whom we interact that marks self-actualization, and a community that embraces this view of fidelity has a strong rationale for socialization, for it is not asking for fidelity to institutions as they are but as they might realistically be at their best. Further, fidelity is never given first to either self as individual or to institution, but to the others with who we are in relation and to the relations by which we are defined. (p. 501)

Preservice teachers, cooperating teachers and university teachers could break down long established barriers it seems, if only a space was created in which the people from the participating schools and the people from the university might begin to engage in conversation around what it means to be a good teacher in today's diversely populated schools. We are all constructors of knowledge. Children, preservice teachers, practicing teachers and university professors should see each other all, as a community of learners, learning from each other with no "expert" expectations.

Conclusion

In this final chapter I spoke about the importance of conversation, response and images. Very little understanding can be gained if meaningful spaces are not provided for conversations to occur focused on multiple understandings of difference and preservice teachers' images of what a good teacher is. Just as I tried to provide a space for Alyssha, Jarod, Kacee and Marjo, I want to keep creating this space within the programs I will be involved with in my work as a teacher educator. A continuing interest in future research is exploring more possibilities for middle spaces. Spaces between safe, trusting places with unstructured conversations and places where inquiry full of critique and hard questions is encouraged. Spaces must be built in to teacher education programs so that preservice teachers will not have to "make time" in their already hectic lives. Preservice teachers might then look forward to coming together to listen to each other's stories, ask questions and provide a variety of responses in meaningful conversations. By doing so, children, preservice teachers, practicing teachers, and university professors can see each other as collaborative members of a community of learners. This community of learners with whom we are in relation, encourages learning in a context limited by fewer boundaries -- one in which we help each other strive for better understanding of our differences.

Epilogue: A Glimpse of the Present

Two years after I first met Alyssha, Marjo,Kacee and Jarod and six months after the inquiry period ended, three of the four participants had full time teaching positions.

Alyssha was hired at the school where she had been a long term substitute at the end of the inquiry. She is presently teaching a 7/8 class and a 5/6 class. She finds first year teaching a challenge, but as always, faces every dilemma that surfaces "head on". In the last e-mail communication I received from her, she wrote "I can't believe that the second month of school in almost done. It is going by fast" (E-mail 10/19/98).

This past September Marjo was hired the Friday before school started into a grade 2 position. It began as a long term substitute position, but by the end of September the position was offered as a full time teaching position. She, too, finds the first year a struggle. In my last phone conversation with Marjo, she said, "things have gotten a lot better. I'm learning how to balance the rest of my life and my school life" (Phone call 10/19/98).

Kacee was hired as a full time supply teacher at a private school in her home province. She, too, was hired just days before school started. In her position, she is responsible for any class without a teacher and serves in other capacities as well. Kacee is provided with materials to fill six of eight bulletin boards. In a recent E-mail communication, Kacee seemed to have experienced a shift away from being satisfied working as a supply teacher as she imagined at the beginning of the year. She wrote, "Supply teaching is a lot like the field experience. You are in someone else's classroom, teaching what you are told to teach and if it doesn't go well, then you improvise. I think I would like to try my own class and see if I could handle it" (E-mail 11/13/97).

Jarod continues to work in the job he had throughout the inquiry period. He sees it as "continued training" for later positions. He is responsible for adults with learning disabilities. He sees his clients as grown up versions of the children he would be teaching in a special education classroom. On October, 1998, he said that he was beginning to substitute teach on a limited basis in a nearby school district.

I find myself in that awkward in between place of finishing up the dissertation and preparing to move to a new city and a new workplace. I have been hired as an assistant professor at a small university in Texas. I will be teaching undergraduate teacher education students on and off the university campus.

I continue to be hopeful.

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APPENDIX A: Ethics Material

Transforming Preservice Teachers' Practices With Children Of Diverse Backgrounds: A Conversational Study

In the proposed research, I develop a weekly conversation group in which a group of preservice teachers tell teaching stories to one another. By listening to each other in the conversation group the preservice teachers and I will explore learning to teach and consider alternative ways to think about and behave towards children different from ourselves in race, social class, language background or any other way that might label a child as "different".

There are three research purposes. First, given my own stories as a student, a teacher and a teacher educator I want to understand how preservice teachers make connections with children different from themselves through the sharing of learning to teach stories, both mine and theirs. Second, through storytelling, response and story retelling I want to understand the process by which preservice teachers form an appreciation of who students are and the wealth of knowledge they bring to school. Third, as a teacher educator, I want to understand the ways in which my personal practical knowledge will influence and impact preservice teachers' attitudes and teaching practices in working with children of difference. By collaboratively critiquing their teaching stories and mine, our mutual goal will be to take greater control over our own development as teachers. This will enable the rethinking and revision necessary in order to develop future teaching practices that will support all students' learning.

Methodology

I want to understand how a group of preservice teachers make meaningful connections with the children they are teaching. I will attempt to accomplish this by sharing teaching stories, both theirs and mine before, during and after practicum in ongoing dialogue in a weekly conversation group. These conversations would take place over a period of twelve months. I will also meet with them individually prior to, during and after their practicum experiences.

This narrative inquiry will be conducted between the methodological frameworks of interpretive biography as presented by Denzin (1989) and the personal experience methods described by Clandinin and Connelly (1994).

Working within these two methodologies will enable me to be a collaborative participant.

Data Collection

Findings will be derived from individual conversations, conversation group discourse (excerpts to be taken from transcribed conversation sessions) and three writings at the beginning, middle and end of their practicum experience. Other data will be collected through field notes. Participants will be invited to keep a "commonplace book". Webster's defines a "commonplace book" as "a book in which noteworthy quotations, poems comments, etc. are written". Participants may share any reflections they wish with the group from their "commonplace books". I will keep my own journal of field notes and reflections throughout the duration of the study.

Data Analysis

Group sessions will be recorded and transcriptions will be made of stories and conversations. The transcripts will be provided to the participants between sessions. The transcripts of the recorded conversations will be given to the participants to confirm accuracy of the representation of their views. Some portions of the taped sessions will be relayed throughout the study. This will enable all participants to reflect on their storytelling and perhaps construct meaning during this process of inquiry.

The storytellers who participate in the conversation group will have a voice in the final approval of how their stories are represented in the final product.

Ethical Considerations:

Guideline 1

Minimal risk is posed to participants. Participants usually appreciate the opportunity to reflect on and make sense of their experience.

Guideline 2

My participants will sign consent forms to participate in the study. (See attached.) All consent forms will be attached to letters which explain the nature of the study.

Guideline 3

My participants will be given copies of my proposal. Written consent forms will guarantee anonymity, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Names of schools, teachers, students will not be used in any publication resulting from the study.

Guideline 4

My proposal is grounded in my personal practical knowledge as a teacher and ongoing professional studies in the areas of: at-risk students, qualitative research and the concern for preservice teachers making meaningful connections with students who might be considered "different" in the classroom today. Ethical considerations will be attached to my proposal indicating my familiarity with the University standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants.

Guideline 5

Weekly conversations and written communication will be used throughout my study to keep my advisor fully informed of procedures pertaining to the ethical guidelines. At any points when I have uncertainties regarding ethical aspects of the study I will discuss these with my advisor before proceeding further.

Student Letter

Dear ____________________,

Student's Name

I am a doctoral student in the Department of Elementary Education at the University of Alberta and for my dissertation research I am interested in understanding how preservice teachers make meaningful connections with children different from themselves through the sharing of learning to teach stories (both mine and theirs), response to those stories and story retelling. I also want to understand the ways in which my personal practical knowledge will influence and impact preservice teachers' attitudes and teaching practices working with children of diverse backgrounds. I am writing to ask whether you would be willing to participate in this research project.

In this research I would like to develop a weekly conversation group in which a group of preservice teachers listen to each other's teaching stories as well as mine. By collaboratively critiquing their teaching stories and mine, our mutual goal will be to take greater control over our own development as teachers. This will enable the rethinking and revision necessary in order to develop future teaching practices that will support all students' learning.

During the study I would like to ask you to participate in a series of individual and group conversations and, if possible, to compose three pieces of writing. The conversations will occur at the beginning, middle, and the end of your practicum experience and involve the following aspects:

1. stories important to you personally
2. stories in which you recognize the links between classroom action and your students' lives outside of school
3. stories of beginning to understand how your interpretations of your behavior and attitude is rooted in your own race, social class and gender just as the classroom students' actions are rooted in their background and experiences.

In any publications resulting from this research, the actual names of people and schools would not be used. You would be free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Anonymity and confidentiality are assured.

My conversations will be audio-taped if you are comfortable with this. Our meetings will be scheduled at mutually convenient times and places over a twelve-month period.

Thank you very much for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Witherspoon

Consent Form

Name ____
Address ____

Telephone ____

I have read Elizabeth Witherspoon's proposal and I **do** agree to participate in her research on learning to teach and understanding difference. I understand our conversations will be audiotaped.

Please check ___ Yes or ___ No

Signature ________________________

Date ________________________

APPENDIX B: Group Conversation Meeting Dates

Group Conversation Dates

04-07-97

09-18-97

09-24-97

10-03-97

10-8-97

10-29-97

11-12-97

11-19-97

12-03-97

12-12-97

01-24-97

03-07-97